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MARY OF SCOTS

MARY OF SCOTS

A PLAY

BY

JOHN PETERSON

ANDREW MELROSE LTD.
LONDON & NEW YORK
1922

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PETERSON

RESERVE

MR. C. F. LEVEL, of His Majesty's Theatre, has full authority from me to arrange for the production of this Play.

JOHN PETERSON.

BOMBAY,
11*th October* 1920.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

[NOTE.—In writing this Play I have made no attempt to adhere strictly to historical truth, or rather to the sequence of place and facts as represented in the histories. If the characters are true, and the incidents such as might have occurred without necessarily being handed down to us in the dry pages of chroniclers, I have done all that I meant.]

MARY . . . . . *Queen of Scotland.*

HENRY DARNLEY . . . *Her Husband.*

JAMES, EARL OF MORAY . . *Her Brother.*

JAMES HEPBURN,
EARL OF BOTHWELL . . *Her Lover*

DAVID RIZZIO.

MORTON . . . . .
RUTHVEN . . . . .
STUART . . . . . } *Scottish Lords.*
MAITLAND OF LETHINGTON .
FAULDONSIDE . . . .

JOHN KNOX.

HOB OF ORMISTON . . . *A Servant of Morton.*

THE COUNTESS OF ARGYLE.

MARY HAMILTON MARY BEATON MARY SEATON MARY CARMICHAEL	*The Queen's Maries.*
CHASTELARD	*A French Knight.*
PARIS	*Bothwell's Servant.*
JAMIE ANDERSON	*The Court Fool.*
TAYLOR	*Esquire attending on Darnley.*
HAY HEPBURN	*Servants of Bothwell.*

A Surgeon, a Doctor, Pages to RIZZIO and the QUEEN, Attendants, the Headsman, the Sworn Tormentor, Girls and Boys and Townspeople attending Chastelard's Execution, Soldiers, etc.

MARY OF SCOTS

ACT I. (1565)

SCENE I.—Rizzio's Study, St. Andrews.
„ II.—The Castle Square, St. Andrews.
„ III.—The Council Chamber, St. Andrews.

ACT II. (March the 9th, 1566)

SCENE I.—A Hall at Holyrood.
„ II.—The Same.
„ III.—The Queen's Chamber, immediately after.
„ IV.—The Torture Chamber in the Tolbooth Prison in Edinburgh, a month later.

ACT III. (1567)

SCENE I.—A Room in Hermitage Castle.
„ II.—Darnley's Lodging at Glasgow.
„ III.—The King's Bedroom, Kirk o' Field.
„ IV.—The Queen's Chamber, Holyrood.

CLEAN HANDS
PLEASE.

MARY OF SCOTS

RENFREWSHIRE RURAL LIBRARY

ACT I

SCENE I

RIZZIO'S *writing cabinet in the Palace at St. Andrews, a small bare room contrived in the corner of a turret. The walls are of hewn stone. To the right is a low and heavy wooden door, at the back a window set in a deep embrasure. The window is covered by a thick curtain. To the right beside the door is a small stool on which is seated a page, a boy of fifteen, in a blue livery. To the left is a writing-table with papers and inkstand on it; it has a drawer which faces the person sitting at it and is at present closed.* RIZZIO, *a swarthy, handsome Italian of thirty-five or so, is seated in a chair at the table. He is writing. For a second or so he continues to write, then sanding the sheet of paper with his sand-box, leans back and reads it over. The room is lit by a lamp.*

RIZZIO. So (*he snaps his fingers to the page*). Jean!

JEAN (*rubbing his eyes. He has been half asleep*). Excellency?

RIZZIO. Jean, Jean, how often must I tell you that a simple Italian secretary, a humble follower of Signor Niccolo Machiavelli, a mere weathercock who attends upon and records the changing humours of princes, is not an Excellency. But you always forget. Come here.

JEAN (*rising and coming to the table*). Humph! Signor

Rizzio, there might be the two ways o' lookin' at that same weathercock.

RIZZIO. *Plait-il!*

JEAN. To some it follows the winds. To others it seems rather to direct them.

RIZZIO. You are a philosopher, it seems.

JEAN. One can't help seeing things.

RIZZIO (*rising and putting his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder*). If you ever see such things, my lad, forget them. Forget them if you would sleep at nights. Such seeings are dangerous. Now take that to Lord James. He'll read it, but I doubt if he'll understand it. These Scotch Lords are not over-intelligent.

(*There is a low knock at the door.* RIZZIO *starts.*)

Who's that—at this hour of night ?

JEAN. You are not afraid, Signor ?

RIZZIO. I am always afraid in this court. I see a dagger in every man's hand ; especially if he happens to be of gentle blood. That is why I shall live to be old. See who it is.

(*The page goes to the door and, opening a small shutter concealed in it, peers through. He turns again.*)

JEAN. It is a man, Signor. And masked.

RIZZIO. Masked ? . . . Is there only the one man ?

JEAN. Yes.

RIZZIO (*after a second's consideration*). Admit him. And wait outside. With your ear to the door, Jean. Stop a minute.

(*Opening the drawer of the writing-table he takes out a small pistol, assures himself that it is loaded and cocked, and then, putting it back, sits at the table so that it is ready to his hand.*)

So. Admit him, Jean.

(JEAN *unbolts the door, and the stranger enters. He is a burly, thick-set man of thirty or so. He is*

wrapped in a heavy cloak and wears a beaver hat with a feather plume. His face is hidden by a mask. He stands silent in the doorway. RIZZIO *rises to greet him, being careful to stand at his own side of the table where he can reach the pistol.*)

Leave us, Jean.

(JEAN *goes out, closing the door behind him.* RIZZIO *points to a chair at the other side of the table, and the stranger comes forward.*)

Be seated, my lord.

BOTHWELL. You know me, then ?

RIZZIO. Common men do not hide their faces.

BOTHWELL. It was for common men only.

(*Slipping off his mask, he stands disclosed as* BOTHWELL, *a handsome, dark, swashbuckling fellow. Under his cloak he is carelessly but richly dressed.*)

RIZZIO. My lord of Bothwell.

BOTHWELL. Ay, Davy. At your service.

(*With infinite caution* RIZZIO'S *hand steals to the drawer of the table where his pistol is hidden.* BOTHWELL, *with a sudden fierce laugh, leans across and closes the drawer before he can withdraw it, holding his hand as in a vice.* RIZZIO *makes no struggle.*)

So. What have you there, friend Davy ?

RIZZIO. Nothing, my lord.

BOTHWELL (*with a sneer*). " Put your finger in the crab's hole, crabbie not at home," eh ? You move at your peril, Davy. You know me.

RIZZIO. My lord, you are violent.

BOTHWELL. When I put my finger in the crab's hole, I have to be. It's my best defence. There, take out

your hand, man. Without the pistol as you value your life. I take no risks.

RIZZIO. I am not afraid of you, my lord. (*He brings out his hand empty.*)

BOTHWELL (*laughing*). No. That's the mischief of it. But you were, Davy—you were.

RIZZIO. All men fear the prospect of danger. When it comes, most of them meet it steadily enough. What may the banished Earl of Bothwell want with me ?

BOTHWELL. First we will put this pretty toy in a place of safety.

(*Leaning over, he takes out the pistol, examines it, and, giving a short, contemptuous laugh, uncocks it and puts it on the table.*)

RIZZIO. I have other defences, my lord.

BOTHWELL. Do you think me such a fool as not to know that ?

RIZZIO. The Queen . . .

BOTHWELL. Ay ! 'Tis her I want to speak of.

RIZZIO (*chuckling*). Oh ho ! You may put the pistol in your pocket, my lord.

(*Dropping all his attitude of defence and suspicion he goes to the door and opens it.* JEAN *is disclosed on the threshold.*)

You need not wait, Jean.

(*Closing the door, he turns to face* BOTHWELL.)

BOTHWELL. Now what the devil do you mean by that ?

RIZZIO. A man who is in love ceases to be dangerous, my lord—except to himself.

BOTHWELL. Who says I am in love ?

RIZZIO. Everyone is in love with the Queen. Besides, you tried to abduct her. That was why they banished you.

BOTHWELL (*laughing scornfully*). That? Arran let me in for that. 'Twas no plot of mine. Come here, Davy. Come and sit and tell me a crack about this long-legged lass that's Queen of Scots.

RIZZIO. Her head is as long as her legs, my lord.

BOTHWELL. Is that so? (*They sit.*) Davy, it's this way. Since they banished me I've been at sea. I'm sick to death of the sea, Davy, and though I'm an Admiral it turns my stomach just like any common sailor man's.

RIZZIO. Doubtless both stomachs are made of the same stuff, my lord, and to the same plan.

BOTHWELL. Very likely. Davy, I want to get back to land.

RIZZIO (*significantly*). And to Court?

BOTHWELL. Of course. All sorts of excitements go on at Court. There's the Queen's marriage, now.

RIZZIO. 'Tis practically settled. Lord Darnley holds the field against all comers.

BOTHWELL. The Lennox. (*He is plainly surprised and annoyed.*) He's to be the lucky one? Well, I suppose he's mortal.

RIZZIO. We are all mortal.

BOTHWELL. But Queen's consorts more than commonly so, eh, Davy?

RIZZIO. Then I wonder that men of sense should aspire to the position, my lord.

BOTHWELL. You mean me? (RIZZIO *bows ironically.*) That's my affair, and I allow no man in Scotland to meddle with my business. You get me back to Court.

RIZZIO. If it suits my purpose, my lord.

BOTHWELL. It will suit your purpose. Take my word for that, Signor.

(*He pats a leather bag which he carries at his waist; a faint jingle comes from it.*)

RIZZIO. I would sooner have something more definite.

BOTHWELL (*laughing*). Ever the same old Davy. There, take it, man.

(*Unhooking the purse, he throws it across the table.* RIZZIO *picks it up, weighing it in his hand.*)

Is that enough, sir ?

(RIZZIO *nods. There is a knock at the door.* BOTHWELL *starts up.* RIZZIO *hastily pushes the gold and the pistol into the drawer of the table and goes over to the door. He turns.*)

RIZZIO. The curtain will hide you. (*Points to window.*)

BOTHWELL. Is that necessary ?

RIZZIO. It may be. You never can tell in a Court.

(BOTHWELL *steps behind the curtain in the window.* RIZZIO *opens the door and* JEAN *is seen on the threshold.*)

Well, what is it ? Why do you disturb us ?

JEAN. It is a lady, sir. One of the Queen's. She is already on the stairs, and I thought it better to warn you.

RIZZIO. You did right. Admit her, and not a word of the gentleman, Jean.

(*Returning to his table he sits down and pretends to work.*)

Go out and open the door when she comes.

(JEAN *goes out, shutting the door. Immediately he opens it again, and* MARY HAMILTON, *a very pretty, slim young girl, richly dressed, enters. Her hair and dress are disordered. Her eyes are red with weeping.* RIZZIO *rises as if astonished.*)

RIZZIO. Mistress Hamilton ! Has the Queen sent for me ?

MARY H. No, no. Signor, you are alone ?

RIZZIO. Of course. Why do you ask ?

(*The girl stands silent.*)

Come, come, mistress, my time is not my own. What is it you want with me ?

MARY H. Oh, sir, is—is it true ?

RIZZIO. Is what true ?

MARY H. That he must die to-morrow. Is there no help ?

RIZZIO. The Frenchman — Monsieur de Chastelard ? What is he to you, girl ?

MARY H. Signor, he must not die. It is cruel !

RIZZIO. It is not my doing. He made love to the Queen, and was apparently overbold about it. It is her fate that men should love her and die for their loving. This French popinjay is not the first and will not be the last.

MARY H. You can save him. Your word with the Queen would do it.

RIZZIO. Why should I give it ? What is he to you ?

MARY H. Signor, I will tell you something that I have told to God alone. He—he is my lover, my husband in the sight of God. The stroke that slays him will slay me too and another life as well. Oh, Signor, for God's sake do not turn from me. Let him be banished, let him be imprisoned, but do not let her murder him.

RIZZIO. Hush, hush ! You must not speak like that.

MARY H. She is a vampire ! She takes all ! Men's love, men's lives.

(*She is hysterical.*)

Signor, for the love of God !

(*The door has opened, and* QUEEN MARY *appears in the opening, a slim, imperious girl, younger than the other, dressed in her mourning weeds, with the sleepy, sidelong eyes and the grace of the Stuarts. She enters imperiously and then stands watching.* RIZZIO *is the first to see her.*)

RIZZIO. You do not know what you are saying.

(MARY HAMILTON *at last sees the* QUEEN. *She stiffens as if at the sight of an enemy and stands silent.* QUEEN MARY *comes forward into the room.*)

MARY. What are you doing here, Mistress ?

RIZZIO. Your Majesty . . .

MARY (*sharply.*) God gave her a tongue, Davy. She was using it to some purpose when I came in. Let her speak for herself.

MARY H. (*after a pause. Nervously*). Your Majesty, I ask for a man's life.

RIZZIO. The Frenchman, Madam.

MARY (*hotly*). He is not fit to live. I pardoned him once, and the filthy fool laid hands on me—violent hands. Pah, I can feel them yet. He shall die.

MARY H. (*losing all control*). Oh, do not say that dreadful word. Mary, I have served you, waited on you, petted you when you had a headache, played with you. Oh, give him back to me.

MARY (*surprised*). Why, what is this ?

RIZZIO. Madam, it is not a fit tale for your Majesty's ears.

MARY. Davy, there are times when you are a pitiful ass. Tell me. I command it.

RIZZIO. She is with child by him.

MARY. Is this true, girl ? (*A pause.* MARY HAMILTON'S *silence is an admission.*) *Mon Dieu!* And when he tired of the maid he turned to the mistress. And yet you ask his life ?

MARY H. I love him. Oh, Mary, do not kill him. Banish him, place him in prison, but do not kill him.

MARY. What a strange thing is this love.

MARY H. Only spare his life.

MARY. I cannot, girl. He hid in my chamber. He laid violent hands on me. What would men say if I spared him now ?

MARY H. See, I will kneel to you as I kneel to the Mother of God.

MARY. God sees the hearts of princes. I cannot, girl. I dare not.

MARY H. Oh, you have no heart!

MARY. If I live longer among this people I think it will turn to ice. I tell you I dare not. My sons shall be Kings, and not of Scotland only, and this fool would soil the stream at the source. For that thought he must die. He is not fit to live.

MARY H. Mary, for God's sake!

MARY. No!

MARY H. (*she speaks as if inspired by some outside power*). Then listen, Queen. In the hour of your deepest need, when heaven and hell are themselves on the edge of a hair, he whom you love and he whom you bear shall fail you miserably. I see the doom rise round you like a winding-sheet and its colour is red like blood.

(*The girl stands for a second with her arm outstretched as if denouncing the* QUEEN, *then turns to the door.* MARY *steps forward.*)

RIZZIO. Madam, she is mad for grief.

MARY. Stop, girl; where are you going?

MARY H. To pray for my lover's soul. That, at least, you cannot take from me.

(*She goes out.*)

MARY. See to her, sir. She is desperate.

(RIZZIO *goes across to the door and says something to* JEAN *in a whisper. The boy follows* MARY HAMILTON, *closing the door.* RIZZIO *comes back into the room.* MARY *has seated herself at the table and is idly turning over the papers on it.*)

MARY. Love's a strange thing. She set hers too low.

RIZZIO. Queens have done that, Madam.

MARY. And will again, Davy. But not I.

RIZZIO. It would be an evil thing for this country if you allowed your heart to rule your head, Madam.

MARY. I? I would not be so weak. I mean to follow my sister Elizabeth. Make all men love me and give nothing in return. . . . Are you superstitious, Davy? Yon was an eerie thing to say.

RIZZIO. Madam, she was talking wildly.

MARY. You do not know this country. There is Highland blood in her veins, and she might have the second sight. Through my love and my son, she said. Ah, well, at any rate I shall have a son, Davy, and he shall rule over all Scotland.

(*She sits musing. Presently* RIZZIO *speaks nervously.*)

RIZZIO. Madam—that Frenchman . . .

MARY (*coldly*). Would you plead for him too?

RIZZIO (*shrugging his shoulders*). He is a stranger like myself. I think you are hard on him.

MARY (*sternly*). Such men are better out of the world. I came for something else, sir, not to be troubled with such importunities.

RIZZIO (*bowing*). I am, as always, at your service, Madam.

MARY. We are alone? This matter I would speak of is private. No one can overhear us?

RIZZIO (*uneasily, with a glance at the window*). No, Madam. No—of course not.

(*Quite calmly* BOTHWELL *puts aside the curtain and steps into the room.* MARY *starts back surprised and a little frightened.*)

BOTHWELL. That is not true, your Majesty. Davy, man, when you want to tell a lie make certain first that no one can so easily prove it one.

MARY. My lord of Bothwell.

BOTHWELL. Just plain James Hepburn himself at your service, Madam.

MARY. Is this another of your plots?

BOTHWELL. No plot at all. Madam, it is not Davy's fault. I came to have a crack with him—a talk.

MARY. A talk?

BOTHWELL. Ay. About a long-legged lass that's Queen of Scotland.

RIZZIO (*he cannot understand that this audacity is* BOTHWELL'S *strongest argument with the* QUEEN). Madam . . .

MARY. Oh—how do you know that they are long, sir? We maidens hide such mysteries carefully enough.

BOTHWELL. Madam, I do not. Davy assures me that your head is longer.

RIZZIO. No, no—Madam . . .

MARY (*with a little gasp*). Oh—oh, you are impossible, Monsieur. (*Laughing.*) But at least you make me laugh. There are not many who can do that in this country. Will you come back to Court, my lord?

BOTHWELL. As your Majesty's jester?

MARY. As you please, sir.

BOTHWELL. I do not think so, Madam.

MARY. Then why have you come? It means imprisonment if you are taken here.

BOTHWELL. Madam, I do not mean to be taken. You need not make signs to me, Davy. Your Majesty, I came for that very purpose, but have since changed my mind.

MARY. Recently, sir?

BOTHWELL. In the last five minutes. Since your Majesty's entrance, if you must have the truth. I'm for the sea again. Though I wish the shifting element would stay still when I am on it.

MARY. It is no more fickle than yourself, sir. Why do you return to it? Is the very sight of your Queen so off-putting?

BOTHWELL. Madam, my Queen is a most pleasant sight, as her mirror doubtless tells her. But (*with a shrug of his broad shoulders*)—well, I do not serve a pretty girl. Life's worth more than that.

RIZZIO. Sir, you are insolent.

MARY. Not to you, Davy, and I need none to take offence for me. My lord, you say too much or too little.

RIZZIO (*indignantly*). Your father would have cut the tongue from him.

BOTHWELL. Ho, ho! The tongue is an unruly member, Davy. He would have had to catch it first.

MARY (*seriously*). My lord, I must have your meaning.

BOTHWELL. You are Queen of Scotland.

MARY. By the grace of God.

BOTHWELL. God will not help you if your own brains cannot. Why do you marry this English boy?

MARY. Fie, my lord, what a question to ask a girl. You will make me blush.

BOTHWELL. I ask it of the Queen, not of the girl.

MARY. Are you jealous of him, sir?

BOTHWELL. Is there any man who would not be jealous of him—(MARY *gives a pleased little laugh*)—for a week at least?

MARY. Oh! Is that the longest you can be faithful, sir? You judge others by yourself.

BOTHWELL. One tires of women.

RIZZIO. Nay, by my faith——

MARY (*interrupting*). No, Davy. I can look after my own honour. My lord, you have one virtue, at any rate. You speak your mind. I think I agree with you. If I were a man there are many things besides women would intrigue me. The woods, the open sea . . .

BOTHWELL. The sea moves about too much. It has a damnable trick of shifting very disturbing to the stomach.

MARY. War, the hunting of men, the wild moors. Oh, there are better things than love in a man's life.

BOTHWELL. There is something of the boy in you, Madam.

MARY. How do you mean, sir?

BOTHWELL. I recognise the spirit of the male.

MARY. For that saying you shall return, my lord. You shall be one of my councillors again.

BOTHWELL. Will you ever take my advice, Madam ?

MARY (*wilfully*). No. But you will have the pleasure of saying I told you so when I do not and the event justifies your opinion. That is what my brother James does.

BOTHWELL. Yes. It is what he would do.

MARY. My lord, Scotland is no easy country for a girl to rule. These ministers, these black-browed scornful lords, they are all round me. I have none I can trust save Davy here, and my brother the Lord Moray. I have no one to make me laugh when a laugh means more than the advice of a hundred grey-bearded councillors. I need stout friends who can laugh when I laugh. I need men who are men, and not saints.

BOTHWELL. Your Majesty could not make a better choice than myself if that is your need. I am certainly not a saint.

MARY. Will you serve me, my lord ? Even though I am a girl—and—and pretty.

BOTHWELL. By God, I will, Madam !

MARY. Hush, you must not swear like that here. Mr. Knox might hear you.

BOTHWELL. What care I for Mr. Knox ? I will swear at him in his pulpit.

MARY (*with a little laugh*). I wish I could. Oh, why am I not a man ?

BOTHWELL. Madam, would you break all our hearts ?

MARY. Would it break your heart, sir ?

BOTHWELL (*impudently*). I was thinking of Davy here. Who would he sing to ?

MARY. Then you will come back, my lord ? You are not afraid ?

BOTHWELL. Madam, I am not afraid of Hell—or Heaven either for that matter.

MARY. The more shame to you, my lord. Davy, you will have the order for Monsieur de Bothwell's banishment recalled. You may bring it to my closet in ten minutes.

There are other matters I have to speak of, and this room of yours is not so secret as I thought. My lord, I am glad. You must make me laugh again.

(*She has risen, and holds out her hand for him to kiss. He takes it, but hesitates.*)

Well, sir, what is it now ?

BOTHWELL. Madam, it is dangerous.

MARY. Dangerous ? To me, sir, or to you ?

BOTHWELL. Faith, it might be dangerous to both of us. I said that I feared nothing, Madam. I was wrong.

MARY. I should like to see you afraid, my lord. 'Twould be a new experience.

(*Bending, he kisses her hand. She gives a little laugh.*)

In ten minutes, Davy.

(*She goes towards the door.* BOTHWELL *hastens to open it for her, and she goes out. He closes it, and turns back to the room.*)

BOTHWELL. Man, that's the cheapest purse of gold you ever earned. This is a court where I need no favour but my own.

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

The scene is the Castle Square at St. Andrews. One sees a portion of it with tall houses on either side and the sea in the distance. At the back is a low scaffold on which is the block. It is hung with black velvet and surrounded by a railing. A short flight of wooden steps leads up to it. The scene is set for the execution of CHASTELARD. *The scaffold is surrounded by archers. On it, grim and solitary, stands the Headsman leaning on his axe. He is masked. A great crowd is pushing about the soldiers*

who are keeping a passage clear to the left of the stage. The crowd is thus penned up diagonally towards the right corner of the stage, a fairly open space being left to the left corner, where the passage reaches a low archway leading to the castle. It is through this archway that the doomed man and his attendants will issue. The crowd consists of all elements—street boys, girls, women, burghers, soldiers, etc. From the confused babel of voices the following stand out.

Two Boys:

THE FIRST. Yon's the Headsman. He's masked, ye see, to make him look grim, but I ken fine who he is. He has a cousin lives down our close.

THE SECOND. Ye don't say.

THE FIRST. Ay.

THE SECOND. What kind o' salary will they be payin' him?

THE FIRST. Oh, naethin' much. It'll be piecework.

THE SECOND. But they'll have to gie the man some sort o' a retainer, surely. The work's no' regular.

THE FIRST (*spying a friend in the crowd*). Hie, Jock, come along here. Ye can see fine here.

(*Another boy struggles through to join them, pulling a smaller brother, who is almost in tears.*)

THE THIRD BOY. Ay, that's grand. Hold your whimperin', you. What way do ye want to be cryin' for? We can see fine here.

THE SMALL BOY (*whimpering*). I dinna wish to see the puir man's heid choppit off. I'm feared.

THE THIRD BOY. And you that would be a soldier.

A pair of Girls:

THE FIRST. What for should they wish to be choppin' off his heid? It's no' seemly.

THE SECOND. Hoots, he's only a French body. Seems he was makin' songs to our lady Queen, and he made them a bit tóo lively.

THE FIRST. It must be fine to be a Queen and chop off anyone's heid that's no' polite.

THE SECOND. If all the lads were to have their heids taken off for singing bawdy songs, there'd be little trade for barbers.

FIRST BOY. Ah! But he did no stop there, lassie.

THE SECOND GIRL (*eager for scandal*). Ye don't mean?

FIRST BOY. Mum's the word. There he is—see, see! The fellie in the braw clothes. That's him.

(*From the archway issues a procession,* CHASTELARD *himself first, a slim, elegant figure in dark green. He is followed by the sheriff, beside whom comes* KNOX, *a man of forty or so, dressed in the usual black minister's gown. They are followed by soldiers.* CHASTELARD *bears himself gallantly, and halts to look at the scaffold boldly. A roar goes up from the crowd.*)

CROWD. That's him! Yon's the man! Papist, papist! Ha, he blenches. He's afraid.

CHASTELARD (*looking round scornfully*). Afraid! Me; a nephew of Bayard? Pshaw!

(*In the right-hand corner where the stage is fairly clear,* DARNLEY, *accompanied by* JENKINS, *a squire, and a couple of attendants, has pushed his way in.* DARNLEY *is a tall, handsome, imperious boy,* JENKINS *a burly Englishman of thirty. They have been playing golf, and one of the attendants carries over his shoulders a couple of strangely shaped clubs. The crowd still continues to roar and shout, while* CHASTELARD *faces them disdainfully.*)

CROWD. Papist, Papist! Hau, hau, papegot!

DARNLEY. Who did you say the sufferer was, Jenkins?

JENKINS. A Frenchman, my lord. One of the japes the Queen brought over with her.

DARNLEY. Lord, how the man postures!

JENKINS. Likely he's a play-actor, my lord, and has never had the stage to himself before.

DARNLEY. Or so interested an audience.

(*He touches one of a little group of men who are standing in front on the shoulder. The man turns. The others with him also turn and begin to take an interest in the stranger.*)

Who is the minister, my man ?

FIRST MAN (*the little group are all artisans*). The minister ? Oh, yon's Mr. Knox in the Geneva gown.

SECOND MAN. I wonder he should come to a sight like this.

THIRD MAN. He's the one for her. He'll gie her her paiks.

DARNLEY. For her ? Whom do you mean ?

THIRD MAN (*impudently*). Oh, just the Queen.

DARNLEY. How dare you speak of the Queen like that ?

THE MAN. Takin' off a man's heid's the best way to make sure he'll haud his tongue. Oh, she's her father's daughter. That's easy seen.

DARNLEY (*indignantly*). Sirs, will you hear the Queen thus openly slighted ?

A MAN. She's no Queen of ours. Let her go back to her Dolphins and her Popes. We're no' wantin' her.

ANOTHER. Queen o' Scots. More like Queen o' French dancing monkeys like yon there.

DARNLEY. Now blood and death, this is not to be endured. Punish the fellow, Jenkins.

(JENKINS *draws his sword and strikes the man over the back with the flat of the blade.*)

JENKINS. Let that learn you to talk ill of your betters.

(*The crowd resent this hotly.*)

A MAN. Eh, sirs, did ye ever see the like ? Beating good honest Protestants as if they were cattle.

JENKINS. Here, clear the way there.

A MAN (*a stout stubborn Scot pushing his way through the crowd with drawn sword*). Here, I'm for ye, Englishman. If ye want a sword, I'll give ye six inches o' mine.

(*He and* JENKINS *engage. The crowd takes sides, pushing round them. The whole place is in a tumult instantly.*)

THE CROWD. Part them. Part them. There'll be murder done. Queen Mary, Queen Mary! We'll have no English marriage. Down with the English! Down with the bloody-minded Papists! We'll have no burnings here. They would bring the Mass back on us.

(*Amidst the various cries and shouts,* KNOX *steps forward on to the steps of the scaffold and holds up his hand, calling out in a voice of authority. The crowd at the sound of his voice subsides at once.*)

KNOX. Sirs, sirs. Lord Darnley. Stop this unseemly brawling. Cannot you let the man die in peace?

DARNLEY. They slandered the Queen.

KNOX. This man who dies stands before no earthly monarch. Will you not give him peace to pray to God, in whose dread presence he must stand so soon?

DARNLEY. Nay, it was near treason. They said that this —this play-actor——

KNOX. Silence, sir. Miscall him not, for he is about to utter the last words he shall speak on earth.

(*The crowd and* DARNLEY *are hushed.* KNOX *comes down from the scaffold, and* CHASTELARD *is seen to mount it. The Headsman comes forward, but he waves him aside and comes forward to the railing. He stands here, looking down on the crowd.* KNOX, *moving through the crowd, comes to* DARNLEY.)

DARNLEY. Do you too doubt the justice of this?

KNOX. I did not say that, my lord. The man deserves to die.

DARNLEY. But——

KNOX. Hush. He speaks.

CHASTELARD. Men of Scotland.

THE CROWD. Ha, ha, he is feared. He is feared of death.

CHASTELARD. I am not feared. I have seen death close enough before. Hear you me now. I will not leave a lie behind me. For I die guilty, guilty of treason to my love and my faith and her honour. But in her, my queen, my empress, my peerless lady, whom I have loved from the first day I saw her, and the roses blushed redder and the birds sang sweeter for her sweet sake, there is no stain at all. For all my love, for all my longing she is cold, cold as the cold grave in which I must lie this night. You have a Princess of Ice for your Queen, ye men of Scotland, and yet the curse on her is this, that, being ice and snow, she must yet spur all men to seek to melt that frozen heart, even as I have sought and, seeking, find my death. For her sake many men shall follow me and turn their feet to death. Woe to this country when the man succeeds! I see battle red and bloody and murder and sudden death. And at the end a scaffold and a block all crimson with blood. Yet will men die willingly for her all her life, even as I now go to die.

DARNLEY. What a strange word was that! Does he prophesy, think you?

JENKINS. The man's a play-actor.

DARNLEY. A poet, rather, and like the swan must needs sing before he dies.

KNOX (*sternly*). He would do better to think of his soul.

CHASTELARD. For love I die. For love shall she herself bow that proud neck, even as I lay mine down. God comfort her in that hour.

(*He turns to the Headsman.*)

Sir, I am ready.

(*The man offers to bind a handkerchief over his face. He puts it aside.*)

No. I would look Death in the face. You shall not make me afraid of him.

(*He goes forward to the block and kneels at it.*)

THE CROWD. Ah!

(*The Headsman raises his axe. The curtain falls swiftly.*)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

The scene is the Council Chamber in the Palace at St. Andrews. It is a large square room, lit by large windows in the back wall. There are doors right and left. A little to the right and at one side is a small narrow table. Three or four chairs are placed at this, and there are some papers on it and writing materials. In the centre of the room at the back is the throne, a more pretentious carved chair set on a dais with a canopy over it. The curtain rising discloses MORAY *seated at the table, with* MORTON *opposite him.* MORAY *is a courtier-like man of forty or so, with a peaked beard. His whole dress and demeanour are sober but cultivated.* MORTON *is a strong contrast—a rough, sturdy man, considerably older and much ruder, but one feels instinctively hardly as forcible. He is reading a paper.* MORAY *watches him. Presently* MORTON, *with an impatient exclamation, throws the paper on the table and rises.*

MORTON. He grows too great, this foreigner.

MORAY. You must expect rank weeds to flourish in a woman's reign.

MORTON. My lord of Moray, we have a short way with such weeds in Scotland. When they grow too rank we lop them. Root and branch.

MORAY. This Rizzio is useful to her.

MORTON. She means to make him State Secretary ?

MORAY. I do not know my sister's meaning, Morton, but I think so.

MORTON (*fiercely*). Then must we lop.

(*He is striding angrily up and down the room. He illustrates his meaning by a savage gesture.*)

Does the fellow wear mail ?

MORAY. How should I know ?

MORTON (*grinning savagely*). He would not let me touch him. He'd know I was feeling for armour. But you put your arm about his neck often enough, my lord.

MORAY. Not for that purpose, sir.

MORTON. Then feel for it next time, my lord, and if he has not a corselet of Milan steel under that stuffy doublet of his I will find means to make a hole in him. But I'll wager he has. He's too cautious is friend Davy.

MORAY. Fie, my lord, would you murder the man ?

MORTON. What right has he here, the stinking Italian monkey ?

MORAY. I do not say but what, if it could be done without violence—or scandal—it might not be an advantage to the State, perhaps, that he should be removed. But I would have no man sin for him.

MORTON (*with a short, harsh laugh*). Oh, be easy, my lord. Your name shall not be breathed on.

(*There is a knock at the door left.*)

MORAY. Hush, here he comes. Come in.

MORTON (*in a fierce, low whisper*). Find out about that corselet, my lord.

(RIZZIO *enters left. He carries a paper in his hand.*)

I will return presently, my lord. When you have finished your business.

(*He goes out by the door by which* RIZZIO *has entered.* RIZZIO *comes forward to the table.*)

RIZZIO. I am not in favour with Monsieur de Morton.

MORAY. Nonsense, Monsieur David, nonsense. My lord Morton is your very good friend, as we all are. He was speaking of you only just now.

RIZZIO. No good, I'll warrant.

MORAY. What makes you think that ?

RIZZIO. My lord, I am not a fool. (*Hands* MORAY *the paper he is carrying.*)

MORAY. What is this ?

RIZZIO. A pardon, my lord.

MORAY (*reading*). How's this ? My lord of Bothwell. You have the Queen's warrant for this, Monsieur ?

RIZZIO. It is signed by her, my lord.

MORAY. No doubt. No doubt. Well, leave it there. I will read it at leisure.

RIZZIO. Yes, my lord.

(*He turns to go.*)

MORAY. Signor David. (*He rises and comes round the table.*)

RIZZIO. Sir ?

MORAY. How came this about ?

RIZZIO. Is it not in accordance with your lordship's wishes ?

MORAY. My wishes ? You speak strangely, sir. I am but a member of the council.

RIZZIO. 'Tis well known, my lord, that your wishes are Her Majesty's.

MORAY. I am the Queen's faithful servant.

RIZZIO. And her brother, my lord, and possibly her heir.

MORAY. Signor Rizzio, what may you mean by that ?

RIZZIO. It may be as well for Scotland, my lord. It takes a wise man to sit in that chair. (*Points to the throne.*)

MORAY. It is a very long time since a wise man sat in it, my friend. What of that ?

RIZZIO. My lord, I speak but as the world speaks. You are the Queen's brother. You have her confidence. You are deep in her counsels.

MORAY (*picking up the pardon from the table*). I did not counsel this.

RIZZIO. Sir, I will be honest. That was my doing chiefly, though it is true that she has a great liking for the man in herself.

MORAY. For Lord Bothwell ?

RIZZIO. It is green sickness. Part of the foolishness of the young. He has, you see, a—a reputation, my lord, and youth always desires to taste experience second hand. A boy's first love is always some lady who has known more of life than she should. Look back on your own youth, my lord.

MORAY. My youth was not spent in such trifles.

RIZZIO. Ay, I had forgot you were a priest. Your lordship has never loved ?

MORAY (*sententiously*). Naught save my duty.

RIZZIO. Duty ? Oh, you people of the North. What have the frosts of duty to do with such a volcano as love ? Now see, my lord, the advantage to the State of one servant who has perhaps read deeper than most in the pages of Signor Niccolo Machiavelli. You desire this marriage with the English lord.

MORAY. I ? I desire nothing contrary to the interest of my sister.

RIZZIO. Did I say it was contrary to her interest, my lord ? He is young. He is handsome. . . .

MORAY. He drinks more than is seemly.

RIZZIO (*with a laugh*). Like a fish, my lord. What of it ? There will be one fault for her to cure, and she will be a happy wife. No woman should marry a perfect husband.

MORAY. No woman ever does. (*Meaningly*) Supposing she does not cure that fault, Signor? What then?

RIZZIO. Then it may happen that a wise man may once more sit in that chair, my lord.

MORAY. You speak strangely.

RIZZIO. Oh, we understand each other, my lord.

MORAY. I do not think so, Signor. I do not look to my own interests in this.

RIZZIO. Granted. But you can conceive a case where one's man interest may be the advantage of more than himself. Of many. Of a whole country, maybe, hovering on the edge of perdition and he the only man to save it. There have been such cases, my lord. Duke Cæsar of Rome, Lord Themistocles of Athens. If Scotland were in such case, where would you stand?

MORAY (*pondering*). Where would you stand yourself, Monsieur David?

RIZZIO. My lord, were I such a man and the State sick of a wasting disease, and I the only doctor knowing a remedy, I would apply it.

MORAY. Even if to your own advantage?

RIZZIO. What does that matter? What does the good or evil of one man matter to the good or evil of thousands? If by grasping power I, and I only, could achieve success, my lord, common man as I am I would grasp it even if I damned my soul.

MORAY. Fie, fie, sir; this is that same doctrine of the Jesuits that a man may do evil if good comes of it. Truth is absolute, not relative.

RIZZIO (*with a laugh*). Oh, you are all metaphysicians in Scotland, but with an eye to the main chance at the same time whether in this world or the next.

MORAY. How does this (*touching the paper*) touch my sister's marriage with Lord Darnley?

RIZZIO. She cannot marry the other, and if we bring him back for very shame she must marry someone.

MORAY. As a defence to her virtue ?

RIZZIO. Rather as a salve to her pride.

MORAY. Signor, there are times when you are strangely ingenious.

RIZZIO. My ingenuity, such as it is, is always at your service, my lord.

MORAY. I shall not fail to avail myself of it.

(MORAY *puts his hand affectionately on* RIZZIO'S *shoulder. He is really feeling in order to see if he wears armour.* RIZZIO, *however, suspects nothing, and is rather flattered at this attention from a great man. They are in this position when the door, right, is flung open and* MARY *enters. She is accompanied by* MARY BEATON, *a plump, handsome girl.* LETHINGTON OF MAITLAND, *a tall, thin man, with a sharp, handsome face, follows behind.*)

MARY. Good morning, brother. Is Lord Morton not here ?

MORAY. He is outside with Lethington.

MARY. Summon him, Signor. And the Lord Bothwell also.

(RIZZIO *goes out left.* MARY *goes to the throne and sits down on it.* MARY BEATON *hands her a piece of embroidery, and she starts working on it.*)

You may be seated, my lords.

(MARY BEATON *sits on the dais at the* QUEEN'S *feet.* MORAY *and* LETHINGTON *sit down at the table.* MORTON, BOTHWELL, *and* RIZZIO *enter left.* MORTON *goes across and sits beside* MORAY. RIZZIO *takes up his station, standing beside and a little behind the throne.* BOTHWELL *remains standing.*)

MORTON (*whispering to* MORAY *as he sits down*). Another knitting match. Well, my lord, did you find out ?

(MORAY *signs to him to be quiet and nods. But* MARY'S *quick ears have caught the whisper.*)

MARY. What is it that my lord of Moray was to find out, sir ?

MORTON. A new way to pay off old debts, Madam. A mere nothing. A matter of a wager.

MARY (*continuing her work*). A wager ? Oh. You had better not let Mr. Knox hear that, James, or he will have you on the stool of repentance next Sunday in a white sheet.

(*She goes on working.* MORTON *is obviously restless, and little pleased that she should treat him so cavalierly. Presently she looks up from it.*)

MARY. There, I have lost my thread. Lord Morton, can you thread a needle ?

MORTON (*indignantly*). By God, Madam, I can not ! I am better at swords than needles.

MARY. Ah, you would be.

BOTHWELL (*stepping forward*). Allow me, Madam. (*He threads her needle for her gravely.*)

MARY. Were you not afraid when I summoned you, sir ?

BOTHWELL. Ay, Madam—of being bored inexhaustibly. I thought this was a Council and I would have to listen to my Lord Morton. I find it a sewing-party.

MARY. That does not bore you ?

BOTHWELL. No man would be bored to watch such white fingers.

MARY. It is naughty of me. I do it to annoy my lord of Morton. He hates everything feminine.

BOTHWELL. You seem to succeed in annoying him.

(MORTON *is indeed obviously remonstrating with* MORAY *and on the point of bursting out.*)

MARY. He is so rude. He is like the big bear of the fairy-tales. (*Louder and for the benefit of the others*) You may take your seat, sir. We have pardoned you.

BOTHWELL. Your Majesty is most gracious.

(*Moving to the table he sits at it.* MARY *hands her embroidery to* MARY BEATON.)

MARY. There, I have finished that rose. My lords, I want your counsel. I am but a girl, and I have been asked to make a girl's choice. My lord of Darnley asks for me in marriage. I must now answer him.

LETHINGTON. Does the English ambassador know this?

MORTON. All the world knows it. Whoever had the keeping of this secret blabbed it a month ago. What else did the young man come for?

LETHINGTON. Her Majesty of England put his father in jail for letting him come.

BOTHWELL. Her Majesty of England would confine all possible husbands to her own domains. For fear that she may yet come to lead apes in Hell.

MORAY. My lord, Hell is no subject for loose talk.

MORTON. Ay. He'll find that out when he makes closer acquaintance with the locality.

BOTHWELL. There will be good society, anyhow. There'll be no want of Douglases.

MORTON. Now, by my father's sword . . .

(*He starts up.* BOTHWELL *watches him closely.*)

MARY. My lords, would you bring your brawls into my very presence? James! Davy!

MORAY. Sit down, man, sit down. (*Pulling at* MORTON's *cloak.*) 'Twas but a joke.

MORTON (*grumbling as he sits down*). Let him keep such jokes to himself, then.

MARY. My lord of Morton, when you have done with your private quarrels I would have your counsel on this matter.

MORTON (*sulkily*). Madam, I say marry him and have done with it. Ever since ye came from France here have we been in a turmoil, and this marriage at the bottom of it. Let us have done with it. Marry him, marry anyone, only marry someone and let us have peace again. Ye are like the hawthorn, bonny to look on and fine to smell, but it brings a mighty lot o' wasps about when it flowers.

MARY. Would you advise your own daughter so ?

MORTON. My daughter is no Queen.

MARY. She may thank God for that, sir.

MORTON. Doubtless she does. But the young man is personable enough. Yes, I would tell her the same. Let us marry, say I, and have an end.

MARY (*to* LETHINGTON). And you, sir ?

LETHINGTON. Madam, there are many advantages in this match.

MARY. What say you, James ?

MORAY. I do not know.

MARY. My lord, you are my brother. If I trust any man, I must trust you.

MORAY. It should not hang on my word. But if you ask me, I must follow Morton here. 'Tis time we had a settlement.

MARY (*to* BOTHWELL). What do you say, my lord ?

BOTHWELL. Madam, in this matter I would not be guided by policy.

MARY. If I were a girl, no. But Queens must, my lord.

MORAY. That's certain.

BOTHWELL. Then do not ask me for advice. I have no politics.

(*There is a pause while* MARY *considers.* MORTON *breaks it.*)

MORTON. Madam, there is one matter to be spoken of. I fear to give offence, but it must be said.

MARY. You may speak, my lord.

MORTON. This pretty boy, if you marry him, shall be the Queen's consort. Never the King.

MARY. I can make him King.

MORTON. I would not try. Scotland can bear its Kings but never its King's favourites. Stirling Bridge bears witness to that.

MARY. Is that all, my lord ?

MORTON (*roughly*). Ay. I thought it as well to give Master Davy here a hint, in case he builds on this marriage. Queen's favourites are no more liked than King's.

MARY (*her temper is rapidly getting the better of her. There are excuses for her. After all, she is a girl placed in a position of great difficulty and almost openly flouted by those who should help her*). There is one thing I wonder Scotland can bear, my lord.

MORTON. Meaning, Madam ?

MARY. Its Douglases. Do they always prate like your lordship ?

MORTON. Madam, we Douglases are Scotland.

MARY. I will not bandy words with you, sir. If you think it the part of a Douglas to insult his sovereign, you are only following in the footsteps of all your ancestors.

MORTON. And they were justified, Madam.

MARY. And so may you be, sir. (*With a sudden change of manner and a bewitching smile*) But you can hardly expect me to admit it.

(MORAY *has been twitching at* MORTON'S *cloak. He turns to remonstrate.*)

You may go, my lords. I will consider your counsel in private. There is no other business.

MORAY (*rising*). Mr. Knox has sought an audience.

MARY. Mr. Knox ? Is that so, Davy ?

RIZZIO. Yes, Madam.

MARY. He would not come when I sent for him. Who is he that I should wait his pleasure ?

MORAY. Mr. Knox is a power in Scotland, sister.

MORTON. Ay, greater than the throne's.

MARY. Are you so bound to your priests here ?

MORTON. Fie, you must not call him a priest, Madam. It would be a scandal to the Kirk.

MARY (*puzzled*). Does he not like to be the same as—as St. Augustin and the holy St. Francis and many more ?

MORTON. Mr. Knox is no' so much taken up wi' saints. We have learned a good deal since Augustine.

MARY. But surely not. The holy Fathers must have known more than we do. They lived nearer to the Gospels.

MORTON. In Scotland, Madam, women are not asked to argify on theological matters.

MARY. *Mon Dieu*, what a country!

(MORTON, *irritated at the French expression, turns away boorishly to the door.*)

I did not say that you might leave, my lord. (*He turns back.*) But your conversation is neither so entertaining nor so polite that I should desire to prolong it. I will see your Mr. Knox, James.

MORTON. Pshaw!

(*He goes out. The others are following him when* MARY *stops* BOTHWELL. *The others go out, and the door is closed behind them.* RIZZIO *goes with them.*)

MARY. Monsieur de Bothwell.

(BOTHWELL *halts and turns.* MARY *rises and comes down from the throne to him.* MARY BEATON, *at a sign from her, remains sitting on the steps.*)

BOTHWELL. You call me, Madam.

MARY. I wish to ask you something, sir. Why would you give me no counsel in this matter ?

BOTHWELL. Perhaps because I have none to offer.

MARY. You are ready enough with it usually, my lord. Or is it because you will not serve a—a pretty girl?

BOTHWELL. Is it the girl or the Queen who asks my counsel, Madam?

MARY. Supposing it were the girl, my lord?

BOTHWELL (*gaily*). Faith, then, it would be easy. I should say to her, "*Ma mie*"—I am not speaking to your Majesty. I should say, "*Ma mie*, follow your heart."

MARY. 'Tis easy said. How if she does not know whither her heart leads her?

BOTHWELL. That makes it the more exciting. A known road has no thrills lying in wait round the corners.

MARY. Ah, have you felt that too?

BOTHWELL. Love's an adventure, Madam. What else?

MARY. And what would you say to the Queen, my lord?

BOTHWELL. If a girl is to be Queen of Scotland she should not wed.

MARY. What may you mean by that? No, tell me. I must know.

BOTHWELL. Look you, my lass——

MARY. Sir, you forget yourself.

BOTHWELL. Nay, I think it is your Majesty that I forget.

MARY. My lord, shall I tell you a secret—a great secret? My brother must not hear it. He would be horribly shocked. Can you be secret, my lord?

BOTHWELL. As the grave.

MARY. Ah, don't. You make me shudder.

BOTHWELL. What is this great secret, Madam?

MARY (*with a sigh*). I wish I could sometimes forget that same Majesty you speak of.

BOTHWELL (*gaily*). Why, so you shall, Madam, if you will. Come with me to Hermitage one day, down there on the borders among the moors and the hills and the heather.

MARY. And be what you called me just now—a lass?

BOTHWELL. Why, so you are. And the bonniest that ever walked down the High Street of Edinbro.

MARY. Monsieur de Bothwell, you may kiss my hand.

BOTHWELL (*kissing her hand*). But——

MARY (*impatiently*). Oh, this country is nothing else than "buts." What is it now, sir?

BOTHWELL. Your Majesty, a lass may be Queen of Scotland and keep the whole grim country dancing at her kirtle-strings, but no' a lass that's wedded. Your sister, Madam, shows you how a woman may rule.

MARY. You mean Elizabeth?

BOTHWELL. Ay.

MARY. She has a wiser head than I, my lord.

BOTHWELL. And a plainer face.

MARY (*laughing*). Therefore will she keep her head longer. She will not lose it for a man.

BOTHWELL. Have you lost yours, Madam, for this pretty boy?

MARY. If I were but a simple girl who need not have a care for politics, I might think so, my lord.

(*She casts her eyes down. He stands looking at her.*)

It is my fate. I must have men like me. I like people to like me, to be pleased to see me, to wish for me. And no one else but he seems to care overmuch whether I stay or go.

(BOTHWELL *does not answer.*)

What do you think, Monsieur? What do you really think? Shall I follow my heart? Speak as if I were only a simple girl.

BOTHWELL (*after a pause*). I do not think you would ever be a simple girl, *ma mie*. You must settle this thing yourself.

MARY. What funny things you say. None of my other councillors talk like you.

BOTHWELL (*laughing loudly*). Ho, ho, Madam, could you expect it? They are wise and have beards.

(*He bows. With a wave of her hand she dismisses him, and he goes out, left.* MARY *stands still.* MARY BEATON, *rising, comes down to her.*)

MARY. That man! I am afraid of him, Mary.

MARY BEATON. Afraid? And you a Queen! He was insolent.

MARY. Yes; but he spoke his mind. There are so few do that in this country. Always they are calculating, considering coldly. In all the time we have been here I have met two men only who speak what they mean—Monsieur Knox, the preacher, and this lord.

MARY BEATON. Monsieur Knox, I grant you. We are all frightened of him. But Monsieur de Bothwell, he is only lath and plaster painted to look grand. He would give up all his great ambitions for a pair of red lips.

MARY. 'Tis not my reading of him. He is more likely to kiss the lips and then throw them away, holding fast to his ambition.

MARY BEATON. Then is he like all other men.

MARY. It makes him none the less dangerous to maidens.

MARY BEATON. He holds no danger for me. Fie, the man's as black as Satan.

MARY. Have you ever thought, Mary, how fascinating Lucifer must be?

MARY BEATON (*laughing*). Fie, Queen, you are *méchante*. Let not Mr. Knox hear you.

(RIZZIO *enters, left, and stands waiting.*)

MARY. Well, what is it, Davy?

RIZZIO. Madam, the Lord Darnley.

MARY. So soon! Davy, what thought you of the Council to-day?

RIZZIO. Madam, I would be careful. These Scotch lords are like a set of card-sharpers for ever playing Beggar my Neighbour. Their course is intricate, Madam. 'Tis by strange stars they steer, and their compass is constant to one point only—that of self. I would be careful.

MARY (*she nods gravely*). Well, I have taken my choice. Admit him.

RIZZIO. Alone, Madam ?

MARY. Yes.

(RIZZIO *goes out, left.* MARY *turns in a flutter to her maid.*)

MARY. Is my cap set straight ? We must not shame our France in this meeting. We must show him that Scotland is not wholly boorish. Quick, girl. There. Now go.

(MARY BEATON *goes out, right.* DARNLEY *enters, left. He comes straight up to the* QUEEN, *taking both her hands in his. He is gallant enough and she a little shy.*)

DARNLEY. Mary, at last! . . . Will you not kiss me at least ?

MARY. No, no. I am a Queen here. This is our council chamber, my lord, and not meant for such foolish games as love. Queens are not common folk, my lord.

DARNLEY. I should think not. But sometimes they kiss.

MARY. How know you that, sir ? Sometimes I wish we were common folk, you and I, Henry. I was told but now to follow where my heart led, but such advice is not for Queens.

DARNLEY. Do I not hold your heart, my Queen ?

MARY. I know not. But this I know, that from our childhood we of the Blood, you and I, my lord, are set apart like the Levites in the Holy Writ. We are

the priests of the future. Our weddings are made for us, and we cannot follow our hearts.

DARNLEY. Mary, hear me swear.

MARY. Not in Scotland, my lord. Nobody swears in Scotland. Not at least so loud that he may be overheard. But you miss my meaning, and it must be made very clear. For my husband I would have a proper man, straight and tall, honest of purpose, clean of body and mind.

DARNLEY. Am I not these?—see now . . .

MARY. My lord, if only for a little we could cease to think of ourselves in this great matter.

DARNLEY. Nay, I do not think of myself. I think of you only. Night and day I think of you.

MARY. No, no; if we are to wed there is another you must think of. The King who comes after us, my lord.

DARNLEY (*puzzled*). Who comes after us?

MARY. My—our child. You make me blush to say it. That is what the marriage of princes means.

DARNLEY. And what think you the marriage of common folk means? Why does the hawthorn blossom in the spring? Why does the laverock sing and the swallow build him a nest, my Queen? If you were a milkmaid I would love you as much. I would still wish to have you close, close to me always.

MARY. If I could be sure of that.

DARNLEY. I will make you sure. Loving is easy, natural. All the world loves at spring-time. 'Tis nature's gift to us.

MARY. And if you love me so easily this spring, my lord, may you not love another as easily when the seasons bud again? Nay, I did not mean to wound you.

DARNLEY. You doubt my faith.

MARY. 'Tis a woman's curse to doubt. You will be true to me, my lord? I think I have no friend, no real

friend, in all Scotland, and if I wedded you and you failed me . . .

DARNLEY. I will be your lover, Mary, not your friend.

MARY. For ever, my lord ?

DARNLEY. Till all the seas run dry.

(*He clasps her in his arms.*)

MARY. You will never fail me, Henry ? Oh, my dear, you do not know what it means to a woman to give herself, the doubtings, the fears . . .

DARNLEY. See, my Queen, my Princess, I will kiss away your fears. (*Kissing her.*)

MARY. You make a gallant lover, sir. Hush! Someone knocks.

(*There is a knock at the door, left. It opens, and* MORAY *enters.*)

MORAY. Madam, Mr. Knox has come.

MARY. Oh, I had forgotten Mr. Knox.

DARNLEY (*imperiously*). Let him wait our pleasure.

MARY. No, no, you shall begin to reign now, my lord. See, you shall sit here beside me, and we shall hear what this Mr. Knox has to say. There, we will put a chair beside mine on the dais. (*Doing so.*)

MORAY. That cannot be, Madam. It is not seemly.

MARY (*pouting*). Oh, James, you spoil it all. Besides, I am afraid of your Mr. Knox. My lord is a man. He will not be afraid of him.

MORAY. I do not like it, sister. It will be misunderstood.

MARY. Please, James.

MORAY (*smiling at her*). Very well. I do not believe there is a man who could resist you anything, sister, if you set your heart on it.

MARY. I hope not.

MORAY. I must be the first to do you homage, sire.

MARY (*to* DARNLEY). There, sir. Now put on your gravest face and look like a King.

(*She makes* DARNLEY *sit down on the dais, and then sweeps a curtsey to him.* MORAY *watches, amused.*)

My King!

(DARNLEY *rises and holds out his hand to her.*)

DARNLEY. My Queen!

(*She seats herself on the throne.* DARNLEY *stands beside her.*)

MORAY. Shall I admit him?

MARY. I must set the stage first for so important a visitor. Call my ladies, brother.

(MORAY *goes to the door, right, and opens it. He signs outside, and the* QUEEN'S MARIES, *three tall, handsome, slender girls, enter and group themselves about the throne. They are followed by pages, who stand round and behind it.*)

MARY. Give me my sampler, Beaton.

(MARY BEATON *hands the* QUEEN *the piece of embroidery on which she has been working.*)

There. Now he will find us domesticated. We are ready, James.

MORAY (*going to the door, right, and opening it*). Mr. Knox, the Queen will see you.

(KNOX *enters. He comes stiffly across and, standing in front of the throne, bows gravely. He is in black gown and bands. Behind him* MORTON *and* BOTHWELL *enter. The lords whisper together, obviously surprised at finding* DARNLEY *on the dais.* MORAY *and* MORTON *remain by the door.* BOTHWELL *moves across and stands beside the throne.* MARY *continues her sewing for a second and then looks up.*)

MARY. Monsieur de Knox, you may kiss my hand.

(*She holds out her hand, and he kisses it rather clumsily.*)

You have come again at last, sir. Last time we quarrelled, I remember. What was it we quarrelled about, James? I have forgotten. I know Monsieur Knox was very unkind to his Queen. I wept floods afterwards.

KNOX. Madam, God knows I had no wish to be.

MARY. Fie, sir, you had written a book. Now I remember. Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women. In which uncomplimentary catalogue you placed me and my sister of England. Was not that unkind, sir?

KNOX (*uneasily*). Madam, the title was meant to be metaphorical.

MARY. Oh, but that is worse, Monsieur—far worse. We girls cannot endure to be metaphorical. It means that you think of us as ideas and not persons. It is an insult to our appearance. Now tell me truly, Monsieur Knox, do I or my ladies look monstrous, or like a regiment, now that you see us close?

KNOX. Madam, I dare not look too close. I remember the fate of Actæon.

MARY (*she clasps her hands gaily, like a pleased child*). We shall make you a courtier yet. We ladies read your book, sir. I am afraid we laughed at it. Was it not naughty of us?

KNOX. You had been better occupied thinking on your sins, Madam. (*Stiffly. He is not accustomed to being laughed at.*)

MARY. Oh, but now you have forgotten the courtier in the priest.

KNOX (*still more sternly*). I am no priest.

MARY (*impudently*). How do you know that we have any sins to think on, sir?

KNOX. We are all conceived in sin.

MARY. *Mon Dieu,* what a doctrine! Do you really think

that a baby can be wicked ? You will get few mothers to agree with you, sir.

KNOX. It is cardinal to our faith. If you do not believe this, your soul is in danger of hell-fire and judgment. Man was born to——

MARY (*interrupting*). Sir, we are not in church, and there is a day set apart for the hearing of sermons even in this country.

KNOX (*growing more and more heated*). Madam, it would be a good thing for this country if there were more sermons and less dancing and idle play in this very palace.

(MORAY *touches him on the arm.*)

No, sir, I will speak my mind. I have been silent overlong. Madam, I am too old for the tricks of a courtier, and if I have spoken too freely in the past it is not overkind of my Queen to make a mock and shoot out her mouth at me even in the presence. I do not come here to jest.

MARY. It is indeed obvious.

KNOX. Nay, I am not to be shaken by a woman's sneers. I am here, Madam, with the authority of the Church to claim a sinner for its discipline.

MARY (*as hotly*). A sinner ? Do you mean me, sir ?

KNOX. God forbid that I should ever have to come on such an errand, Madam ! It is one of your ladies—Mistress Hamilton.

MARY. James, what is this ? What would they do with her ?

KNOX. It is the ordinance of God's Church, Madam. If a woman sin she must stand openly confessed before the congregation in their full view.

BOTHWELL (*contemptuously*). In a white sheet, Madam. Oh, it is a pleasing spectacle. And if the lass is a pretty one and well favoured, you may see all the elders eyeing her as if she were a second Susanna.

MORAY (*hotly*). Sir, you are ribald.

BOTHWELL. Not I, my lord Moray, but the Church that ordains such expositions of female beauty.

KNOX (*sternly*). Do you too not fear the Church ?

BOTHWELL. Not I. Ye need never glower on me, my man. It takes more than a black gown to scare James Hepburn.

KNOX. You shall feel its weight some day, my lord.

BOTHWELL. Come you down to Liddesdale, Master Knox, and we shall find out.

MORTON. Nay, this is not to be borne.

(*Draws his sword.* BOTHWELL, *stepping back, disengages his with a steady smile.*)

MORAY. Sirs, remember you are in the presence. Forbear, for Heaven's sake.

KNOX. My lord of Morton, put up your sword. I need the help of no earthly weapons.

MARY. I think this country is a lunatic asylum. You cannot come into my presence but your jealousies must break out in open brawling. Master Knox, I do not know this custom that you speak of. Nor is it followed in my court. You shall not have this girl. 'Tis shameful!

KNOX. Madam, the ordinances of God are not to be set aside for any feelings of weak pity.

MARY. Weak ? Would you insult the throne of Scotland, sir ?

KNOX. I serve no earthly throne.

MARY. Shall I tell you what you do serve, Monsieur ? Your own will. It is the way of all Scotland.

MORAY. Sister, the girl has sinned.

MARY. Then let God punish her!

KNOX. Madam, let me entreat you, let me wrestle with you as the angel wrestled with Jacob. You have seen this people, how hard they are, how stiff-necked.

How quick to take offence, how slow to forgive. It is a dour people, this of yours.

MARY. God, do I not know it, sir! I think they are made of stone.

KNOX. And for that reason will outlast things that are softer. Madam, do you think that they have fought and suffered and died, in thousands, yea, thousands, to win their liberty in order that a girl may take it from them? God forbid that I should plead expediency as an excuse for doing what God has commanded us, but it is expedient at the very least that in this matter you should yield. Can there be one law for the poor and another for the powerful? If a street-walker sins she is put to shame by order of the elders. Shall a maid of honour escape?

MARY (*pleading with him*). Think what it means to a girl. Have you no thought of her shame, no compassion for her misery? Even God is compassionate.

KNOX. Only to those who repent. Madam, God knows I do not see pain lightly. Often I cannot bear to chastise my own children for tears, but whom God chasteneth He loveth.

MARY. Always you answer with a text. It is you that chasten, not God, though you take His name in vain. You will drive her mad. Already she is distraught with grief for her lover's death. Has she not paid enough?

KNOX. The Church claims her, Madam.

MARY. By the splendour of God, sir, it shall not have her. You are lucky in that you come to me and not my father on such an errand. He would have clapped you into prison and left you there to rot.

MORAY. Sister!

MARY. I mean it.

KNOX. Madam, there is no prison in all Scotland that can hold the spirit. Nay, I will speak, sir. (*To* MORAY,

who is trying to restrain him.) Shall I not give this woman the message God has put into my mouth? Look you, Madam, you are but a spoiled and peevish girl, who would play with power as a child plays with a doll. Take warning ere it is too late. God is not lightly mocked.

MARY. Oh!

(*She has sprung up at the insult. She stands staring down at him, gripping the arms of the throne. Even* KNOX *begins to feel that he has gone too far and to mumble apologies.*)

KNOX. If I have spoken too hotly, Madam, I am sorry, but I can no other.

MARY (*almost too furious to speak*). Go, sir! Go! I will not hear another word from you.

(KNOX *bows and goes out, left.* MORAY *and* MORTON *follow him in silence.* MARY *covers her eyes with one hand. She waves to her attendants.*)

Leave me—leave me alone!

(*As they go out she turns suddenly to* BOTHWELL, *instinctively seeking help from him, not* DARNLEY, *who throughout the scene has sat confused, irresolute, and now rises, uncertain what to do.*)

MARY. You carry a sword, sir?

BOTHWELL. Some have found that out to their cost, Madam.

MARY. Can you not use it?

BOTHWELL (*with a light laugh*). Eh? Not on Master Knox. That were too dangerous a game to play. They would tear me in pieces. You may do anything you like to a people save destroy their idols, and in Scotland for our idol we have a minister in a Geneva gown.

MARY. You may go, sir. And you too, Henry. No, do not speak to me. Go—for God's sake, go!

(*She watches them go out, left. The room is empty save for herself. Suddenly breaking down, she throws herself into the throne and, covering her face with her hands, sobs silently. The curtain falls on the solitary figure.*)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

It is a full year later and more, the time March the 9th, 1566. *The scene is a hall or chamber in Holyrood, Edinburgh, adjacent to the main hall of the Palace. At the back in the right corner is a winding stairway which leads to the upper floor. Here are situated the private apartments of the* QUEEN. *To the left of this there is another door at the back. In the other corner is a large window with lozenge panes of glass. This is curtained. Between the staircase and the window is a deep, old-fashioned fireplace with a fire of wood logs burning brightly. There is an ingle-nook to the left of it and chairs and settles to the right. In the right wall is another window similar to the one at the back. In the centre of the left wall is an arched opening which opens into the main hall of the Palace. This is closed by a leather screen which can be opened and is at present half open. The room is lit by torches stuck in brackets on the wall on either side of the fireplace and by the light from the fire. The light streams in from the other room.*

As the curtain rises, the room is empty save for a lackey or page who stands at the half-open door, lounging and looking into the other room, where obviously some gaiety is in progress. Music and singing are heard from it. Immediately after the rise of the curtain there is a burst of laughter and sounds of applause, and with the sound of this DARNLEY *strides angrily in from the other room, followed by* MORTON. *He notices the lackey.*

DARNLEY. What do you here? Go. We would be alone.

THE LACKEY. Sire, the Queen——
DARNLEY. Do you hear me? Leave us.
THE LACKEY. But——
MORTON. Go, good fellow, go. I will be your surety.

(*He pushes the man gently into the other room, closes the door, and then turns to watch* DARNLEY, *who is striding angrily up and down the room.*)

DARNLEY. You see, Morton, you see. That is where I am expected to sit, at her feet like a damned puppy that waits upon its mistress for the bones from her table.

MORTON. At any rate you sit, my lord. We others stand in her presence.

DARNLEY. It is only right you should. She is the Queen. But to me, my lord, she is my wife. Is it seemly that a wife should sit throned in her husband's presence and he on a footstool at her feet? There is something in the Bible against it. Does not St. Paul say that she shall keep her head covered, or some such sign of humility?

MORTON. She covers it with a crown, my lord.

DARNLEY. Do you think that betters it? Am I to have no share in the crown? What think you I married her for?

MORTON. It is what I have been wondering this long time since, sire.

DARNLEY. In herself she is no woman for a man of my temper. If I so much as look at a girl, she holds me unfaithful and rates me accordingly.

MORTON. You will at least admit, sire, that you have been busy looking.

DARNLEY. And why not? I married to be a King, not a saint.

MORTON. Scotland is not to be ruled by saints.

DARNLEY. That is what I tell her. If a man is to rule, he must be full-blooded, a jolly fellow, not a

lackey in attendance on one woman. He must be popular.

MORTON. It is a curious thing that intemperance is always popular.

DARNLEY. He must be able to take his wine and make love to a pretty girl, and not sit sewing a sampler, as she would have me. She will not give me power. Do you know what they have done now? Carved an iron tablet with my signature on it which they use on documents of State. As if I could not be trusted with a pen. And that damned Italian monkey leaning over her chair and singing to her, and for ever whispering in her ear.

MORTON. That man is the curse of the country.

DARNLEY. I would to God he were dead and buried!

MORTON. You mean that, sire?

DARNLEY. Mean it? God, I could find it in me to do it with my own hands!

MORTON. For such a task Kings can find other hands, sire.

DARNLEY. What do you mean?

MORTON. My lord, I will be open with you. There are many in Scotland would be blythe to see Master Davy in his coffin—I among them.

DARNLEY (*scornfully*). Wishes of that kind are not likely to hurt the man.

MORTON (*in a low whisper*). What if the coffin be ready, my lord? What if the grave be dug?

DARNLEY (*shivering. It is impossible to escape the other's meaning*). What do you mean, sir?

MORTON. Sire, to-day, to-night, there are hands within this very palace ready and willing to lay him there if you will say the word.

DARNLEY. It would be murder.

MORTON. Not murder—justice. And who has more right to execute it than the King?

DARNLEY. She—she would protect him.

MORTON. My lord, she cannot. It is all prepared. But she might avenge him. That is where we all stick. The rest is easy. A stab. A squeal. He will not fight.

DARNLEY. It would be treason.

MORTON. Ay—unless it is done for the King and with the King's authority.

DARNLEY. Will—will it be secret ?

MORTON. Sire, we have signed a bond, I, Ruthven, and the others. For our own surety in case of traitors. If we had but your signature on it we might laugh at her.

DARNLEY. Laugh at her ! God, what would not I give to laugh at her, to show her that I am not the poor weak fool she thinks me ?

MORTON. Then sign, sire. I have the paper.

(*Feeling in his doublet.*)

DARNLEY (*irresolute*). Let me see it. (*He looks at it.*) No—I will not sign. She—she would find it. It might cost me my head.

MORTON. Pshaw, are you not the King ?

DARNLEY. I will not sign.

MORTON. Then must we endure Master David.

DARNLEY. Hush ! Put that away, for God's sake ! Someone comes.

(RIZZIO *enters, left.*)

RIZZIO (*to* DARNLEY). My lord, the Queen sends me to seek you. She hopes for your presence at the masque.

DARNLEY. Is that message from the Queen to her husband, signor, or to her subject ?

RIZZIO (*laughing pleasantly*). Faith, I do not know. But if I were the husband of so peerless a lady I would go and gladly.

MORTON. And if you were the subject, sir ?

RIZZIO. Why then, sir, it might be dangerous not to.

DARNLEY (*sullenly*). I will not go. Am I a boy that she should send a lackey to summon me ?

RIZZIO (*still treating the matter lightly*). It is a good masque and entertaining, sire. I wrote it.

DARNLEY. I have said I will not come.

RIZZIO (*serious*). My lord, I will be plain with you. It would be wiser if you did. Her Majesty is in no certain temper.

DARNLEY. Are you the guardian of her temper, sir ?

RIZZIO. Thank the good God I am not. But I can at least discern its shiftings. You had better come, my lord. Why not ? For five minutes, for ten. What does it matter ? Women ask these things.

DARNLEY. I will not. I will not be made a show of before the lords. I will not sit at her feet like a tame spaniel. That is your place, sir, not mine.

RIZZIO. You behave like a silly, headstrong boy.

DARNLEY (*laying his hand on his dagger*). Sir !

RIZZIO. Nay, never lay your hand on your dagger, my lord. You cannot use it on a servant who only seeks to serve you by plain speaking. I speak the truth, and if you ask my lord Morton he will bear me out. You desire many things of the Queen. Do you think she will give them unless you humour her ? She is a woman first, after all. Your whole power stands in her only. Who in all Scotland will pay you honour save as her husband ? As a woman she looks for love, and you give her sulky looks ; as a Queen she looks for obedience, and you send her flat refusal.

DARNLEY. I will not come.

RIZZIO. Very well, my lord. I will take your message.

DARNLEY. And say that it is to my wife, not to the Queen.

RIZZIO. Queens can unmake their marriages, my lord.

(*He goes out, left.* DARNLEY *seizes* MORTON'S *arm excitedly.*)

DARNLEY. Quick, man, give me the paper. I will sign.

(MORTON *takes out the paper and gives it to him. He goes across to a small table by the wall on which there are writing materials, and, taking up a pen, signs hastily.*)

God, I would sign away my soul to be revenged on him! (*Returning the paper.*) You will not use this?

MORTON. If you stand by us, sire, there will be no need.

DARNLEY. Have I not reason to stand by you? God, I could do it myself! A headstrong boy! I will have his blood for that.

(*A sound of laughing voices comes from the stair in the corner.* DARNLEY *and* MORTON *draw back, but are fairly caught and cannot escape. From the arch of the stair* QUEEN MARY *enters in state, accompanied by* LADY ARGYLE, *a handsome, middle-aged woman. She is followed by a bevy of laughing girls. At her entrance the doors of the inner room are thrown open and there is a flourish of trumpets. As she comes forward, she sees* DARNLEY *and turns to meet him. The others draw back, leaving them face to face.*)

MARY. You are not going, Henry?

DARNLEY. Yes.

MARY. Why? I asked you to be present at the masque. Did Davy not give you my message?

DARNLEY. Oh yes. Davy gave Henry his orders all right. But you forget, Madam. Even if I am your husband, I am not your subject to be summoned by any lackey you may send.

MARY. How strangely you talk.

DARNLEY. No more strangely than he did.

MARY. Henry, if I erred in sending him, forgive me. But you might stay. I want you to stay close to me. To-night of all nights.

DARNLEY. Why to-night?

MARY. I do not know. It is my fancy. I must have company to-night.

DARNLEY. Oh, your Majesty will not lack for company. There is always Davy.

(*He turns to go.*)

MARY. But where are you going ?

DARNLEY. About my own business, Madam.

MARY. You would not shame me in open Court, Henry ?

DARNLEY. I do not like your Court, Madam. There is too much music in it. I have no mind to be another Saul and sell my soul, and possibly my crown, to a harpist.

LADY ARGYLE. Surely it were time enough to talk of crowns, sir, when you possess one.

(*The girls all giggle at this.* DARNLEY *is furious.*)

DARNLEY. You see, Madam, how your courtiers treat me.

MARY (*smiling ruefully*). Faith, Henry, I think you brought that on yourself.

DARNLEY. Always they make a mock of me—always. 'Tis the principal sport of your Court, Madam. And you—you egg them on. You have no pride for your husband. He is a matter for laughter, for a fool's jest ; anyone's butt who can turn a ready tongue or twist the keys of a screeching fiddle. And you—you stand and laugh.

MARY. Nay, but this is midsummer madness. You dream these things, my lord.

DARNLEY. I do not dream him. He is too ever-present to be a vision.

MARY. Davy ? My lord, you are prejudiced like all these Northerners, who cannot appreciate a swift wit and a ready tongue. In France we laughed at these things. Here you glower if one laughs. Mr. Knox thinks it sinful if one laughs, and you that everyone must needs be making fun of you. Is one never to laugh in this country, sir ?

DARNLEY. Madam, I shall not stop you laughing.

(*Turning deliberately on his heel he goes out at the back.* MARY *turns with a gesture of despair to* LADY ARGYLE.)

MARY. What am I to do ?

LADY ARGYLE. My dear, what does any woman do with a husband ? It is not serious. They are all so. Probably his dinner has disagreed with him.

MARY. I cannot give him the crown. The lords would not abide it.

LADY ARGYLE. Also he could not wear it. Things are better as they are.

MARY. What a strange thing is love.

LADY ARGYLE. Love has nothing to do with the marriage of princes, your Majesty. Come, let us go see Davy his masque.

(MARY *goes out into the ballroom, the others, except* MORTON, *following her. Her entrance is greeted with a burst of music. The door is closed behind her. As her train disappears,* RUTHVEN *enters from the back, a tall, thin man dressed in armour with a face like death for paleness. He puts his finger to his lips, signing to* MORTON, *and comes over to him.*)

RUTHVEN. I saw him leave. You have him ?

MORTON. Fast as a rabbit in a springe. Here is his warranty, Ruthven. (*Tapping his doublet.*)

RUTHVEN. 'Tis for to-night, then ?

MORTON. Do you not agree ?

RUTHVEN. The sooner the better, say I, now that we have this. Will he bear a part with us ? Will he carry a dagger himself ?

MORTON. Ay, if I have to put it in his hand. I know the man. When the pinch comes he'll rat if there's danger. The rope we put about our necks must hold

his too in the same noose or we'll find him at the end of it pulling it tight.

RUTHVEN. He'll be clever if he begowks us.

MORTON. He had best not try. Go, my lord, get your men and post them.

RUTHVEN. We meet here?

MORTON. Ay, in half an hour. When the folly's over. (*Pointing towards the other room.*)

(*BOTHWELL enters left. He is, or pretends to be, more than a little drunk.*)

BOTHWELL. Hullo! What do you two here? You look for all the world like a couple of conspirators.

MORTON. Against whom should we conspire, my lord?

BOTHWELL. I do not know. Unless it were friend Davy. Ha, have I touched you there? Have I pinked you, sirs? Have I hit you, Ruthven? He's to be our next King, ye know. After King Henry, King David.

RUTHVEN. He is like to be our present one. How goes the masque?

BOTHWELL (*laughing*). God, you never saw such folly in all your life! Shepherdesses in silk and powder lying under paper beech trees sporting with Amaryllis; pasteboard dragons stuffed with sweets; prancing unicorns whose hind legs will not follow the front ones; and King David harpin' away for dear life as if he were playin' before Saul.

RUTHVEN (*with a sneer*). Saul's not there.

BOTHWELL. No; Saul's got the sulks. So have I. I am drunk with caterwauling and the scraping o' catgut. I'm for bed. Good even to you, my lords, and pleasant dreams.

(*He goes out at back.*)

MORTON. The drunken toss-pot.

RUTHVEN. We've naught to fear from him.

MORTON. No, but set a guard at his door. He's aye dangerous.

RUTHVEN. I'll see to it. In half an hour, then.

(*They go out,* MORTON *left,* RUTHVEN *at the back.*)

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

The curtain falls for a second to indicate the passage of half an hour. As it rises, RUTHVEN *enters from the back. He looks round cautiously and signs, and two soldiers dressed in armour and jerkins come in. He gives them their instructions hastily, posting them at the entrance to the stair leading to the* QUEEN'S *apartments.*

RUTHVEN. You will take your post here. The Queen has already retired. You will allow no one save Master Rizzio to pass by this stair into her apartments. No one, you understand?

A MAN. Ay. No one save Master Rizzio only.

RUTHVEN. Yes. If any ask, say that it is the King's order.

THE MAN. And if Master Rizzio ask?

RUTHVEN. Say that you do not know. That your captain has ordered this. Be silent and faithful. I will come again immediately.

(*The* MEN *take up their position, one on either side of the arch giving on to the stair.* RUTHVEN *goes out at back. Presently from the left comes the sound of laughter, and* JAMIE ANDERSON, *the Court fool, enters, followed by girls and pages, among whom are the* QUEEN'S MARIES. *They are pulling him about. He is protesting.*)

JAMIE. Na, na. A'm no' in the vein to-night. I canna always be a fool. That's where I differ from other folk, ye see.

MARY SEATON. What's the matter? What's put you in the dumps?

JAMIE. A dinna know. There's something wrang wi' the

place to-night. It's in the air. What's yon man doin' there ? (*Points to the sentinels.*)

A PAGE. Him ? He's only a sentinel.

MARY CARMICHAEL. What a dull fool you are become, Jamie. In France we would have had you whipped if you had been so tiresome.

JAMIE. Whipped ? Me ?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Imphm !

JAMIE. Mercy sakes ! What a like land.

MARY SEATON. Here's Signor David. He'll help.

(RIZZIO *enters left. He carries a lute.*)

MARY CARMICHAEL. Master Rizzio ! Master Rizzio !

RIZZIO. What is it, *ma mie* ?

MARY SEATON. Come you here a minute.

RIZZIO. Nay, I am for the Queen's room. She expects me.

JAMIE (*sniffing contemptuously*). More caterwauling.

MARY SEATON. Come you and put him down, Master Rizzio. To-night he is but a dull fool, and should be whipped if I had the way of it.

JAMIE. Put me down ? Fie, am I a maid that any man should put me down ? (*A* PAGE *laughs.*)

MARY SEATON. If you talk grossly, Jamie, you shall be whipped.

RIZZIO (*he has stood to watch, smiling*). What has he been doing ?

JAMIE. A'll sing ye a song, Master Davy.

(*Singing.*)

Fee, fie, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Italian mun.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

Though it's like to be a crusty loaf and no over sweet. Sir, you may sing high, or you may sing low, or you may sing out of tune, as maistly ye do, but a'll ne'er gie ye the best o' an argyment while Scotland stands where she did.

RIZZIO. You would keep to words only ?

JAMIE. What is there better than your word ? It will stick as deep as a dagger and deeper. It will strike as hard as a sword and harder. And it holds as fast as the grave.

RIZZIO (*entering into the sport*). And it will change as often as a woman.

JAMIE. A woman ? Faith, with a woman, words will outlast the Judgment Day. When the trumpet blows, ye'll find her argifying wi' the recordin' angel. Ye can never get to the tail-end o' a woman's words. 'Tis like climbing a mountain. Aye ye think ye're at the end o' it, and then in comes Madam wi' a flood o' phrases rising sky high, and all your labour for naught.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Master Davy, this is a Court of Love we have set up after the fashion of France.

RIZZIO. And what is the cause ?

MARY SEATON. To determine in what essentials a maid may differ from a man.

RIZZIO. Surely there is no need of judges to tell you that.

JAMIE (*sniggering*). So I tellit them, the silly tawpies. Ask any o' Her Majesty's lieges and they'll tell ye the answer to that question wi'out the winkin' o' an eyelash. He, he, he !

MARY CARMICHAEL. Sirs, you are *méchantes* and think grossly. 'Tis moral qualities we are to examine.

JAMIE. 'Tis easy done. The women have none.

MARY SEATON. We have Master Jamie for the prosecution.

RIZZIO. He is advocatus diaboli.

JAMIE. Here, there's the one thing. I will na play at this ploy if a'm to be misca'ed in Latin or strange tongues.

MARY SEATON. Signor Davy, we want you for the defence.

RIZZIO. What do I know of maids ?

JAMIE. Ay, ay, he's gey suitable. He has a cuddlesome disposition would make any girl's hair curl wi' excitement. But it'll be argyment, mind. No' singin' or scrapin' o' catgut, Signor.

RIZZIO (*laughing*). I have no long time to spare, but for the honour of fair ladies and the brightness of their eyes, have at you, sir. Do you begin. I'll match your folly with my sense.

JAMIE. There's no sense where the lasses are concerned. Tell me, then, you that's sic a champion, what do ye spy in a maid that makes ye seek her company if it is no' that she is a maid and no' a man ?

RIZZIO. But 'tis the principal point, sir.

JAMIE. Ay, but leave it out o' the reckoning.

RIZZIO. A maid is dainty.

JAMIE. So is our cat when she pulls the guts out o' a herring and dodges the bones. 'Tis no' a Christian virtue that.

A PAGE. Losh, man, listen to him.

RIZZIO. A maid is bonny.

JAMIE. Whiles. There's one or two here I would no' just exactly call bonny. Boney, perhaps. Ay, ay. There I might be with you.

MARY SEATON. Fie, sir, you are ungallant. All maids are beautiful. 'Tis a cardinal article of faith.

JAMIE. Well, well, if they veil their faces and take care no' to sit in too strong a light, doubtless they'll all get husbands one of these days.

(*One of the pages chokes with laughter at this sally, and has to be patted on the back by a companion.*)

MARY CARMICHAEL (*indignantly*). Oh, we do not want husbands.

JAMIE. Ay, ay. A see ye've learned yer trade. 'Tis the surest way o' catching them.

RIZZIO. A maid is all sweetness and sunshine, all magic and moonshine.

JAMIE. I grant you the moonshine bit, ay, ay.

RIZZIO. Made of honey and roses and dew, bitter as the sharp sweet taste of a peach that has ripened on the sunny side of a wall, sparkling as the bubbles in a glass of French wine.

JAMIE. And wi' much the same sort o' headache next morning.

RIZZIO. She is like your Northern sea, grey and sorrowful one moment and the next dancing and glittering in the sunshine for sheer joy of life.

JAMIE. Lord save us, here's a mixture o' metaphors. Ye have bitten the lassie, for she is a peach, ye have drunk her as a sparkling vintage, ye have plucked her as a rose, and now ye must needs swim in her as the ocean. Go your ways, sir. Go your ways.

RIZZIO. She is shy and bold, gay and grave all at once. Who shall tell the wonder of a girl's heart ?

JAMIE. Marry that will I. Look at that one, now. She looks mighty pensive. Thinkin' on her sweetheart, ye'd say, and wonderin' how many kisses will he gie her between sunset and sunrise one o' these days. Ye'd be wrong. That far-away-dying-duck look in her eyes is just a trick they can all put on. She'll be thinkin' o' her denner, or does her gown hang straight, or how she can catch a flea that's got into her farthingale and she doesna want for a bedfellow. Go your ways, sir. Go your ways.

THE GIRL. Oh, you villain.

A PAGE. Eh, mon, did ye hear that ? A flea. Look at the lassie blushing.

RIZZIO (*laughing*). Have it your own way, Jamie. I must leave the field to you.

JAMIE. Ay, ye can sing, but ye canna argue. It takes a Scot to do that.

RIZZIO. I have not the time. The Queen waits for me. Ladies, your servant.

(*He goes out, up the stairs leading to the* QUEEN'S *apartments.*)

JAMIE. Weel, weel, God gave some a voice and others a

good appearance. We canna have everything in this world.

(MORTON *has entered at the back. He comes forward.*)

MORTON. What are you doing here, Mistress ?

MARY SEATON. Amusing ourselves. Or, rather, trying to. Jamie's as dull as one of your Geneva Ministers, my lord.

MORTON. Mistress, that you are young is no sufficient reason for ungodly talk. Are none of ye in attendance on the Queen ?

MARY CARMICHAEL. No. To-night she has—who has she, Madge ?

MARY SEATON. Lady Argyle, Lord Stewart, and—oh, and Davy. They play at the cards.

JAMIE. An old cat, a young kitten, and two large and handsome rats, one a bit over size in the paunch. A lively party for the tiles.

MORTON. If you speak of the Queen's Majesty like that, fool, I will have you whipped. Ladies, you must be gone from here.

MARY SEATON (*pouting*). Where can we go ?

MORTON. 'Tis no affair of mine. Go to bed and stop there. Where are you going ?

(MARY CARMICHAEL *is trying to enter the arch leading to the stairs. One of the sentinels stops her. She turns, astonished.*)

MARY CARMICHAEL. What means this, sir ?

MORTON. It is the King's orders. To bed, ladies, to bed. You cannot see the sun in with your dancing.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Why may we not go to the Queen ?

MORTON (*grimly*). Because I say so. (*The girls shrink back from him.*) I tell you it is the King's orders. He cannot sleep. Your noise keeps him awake.

MARY CARMICHAEL (*to* MARY SEATON). Here is something wrong.

MARY SEATON (*whispering*). I know, I know. Do not let him suspect. (*Out loud*) You are mighty anxious to get rid of us, sir.

MORTON. I tell you it is the King's orders.

MARY SEATON (*impudently*). I would as soon be at church as in this Court. If one laughs, and God knows there is little enough to laugh at, all men frown as if it were a deadly sin. If one makes a noise they send us to bed. Even their fools smack of the pulpit and will as soon give you a sermon as a jest. Your servant, my lord. If the Queen summons us, you will inform.

MORTON. I will be your surety.

(*The crowd goes out, left. As soon as they have gone,* MORTON *signs to one of the sentinels, and places him to watch the door, left. Then, going to the door at back, he opens this.* DARNLEY *enters, followed by* RUTHVEN. DARNLEY *is obviously in a state of great excitement. He looks round suspiciously.*)

DARNLEY. These are your men ?

RUTHVEN. Oh ay. They are my ruffians. I could hang them to-morrow, and they know it.

DARNLEY. They are safe ?

RUTHVEN (*with a laugh.*) As the grave already digged in the courtyard.

DARNLEY (*to* MORTON). The gates are held, sir ?

MORTON. Yes. Bothwell's men gave some trouble. We have locked them in.

RUTHVEN. He's drunk as usual.

DARNLEY. You are sure there is no danger ?

RUTHVEN. Danger from a stinking parlez vous like yon ? As much danger as from a rat in a hole when the ferrets are gathered about the entrance. (*Points to his man.*) There's a good ferret for you, sir. A most excellent weasel. Come on, my lord of Morton, give

the signal. Dispatch, say I, dispatch. Heaven is weary waiting for our friend Davy.

DARNLEY. But the Queen ?

MORTON. You are her husband, sir. You must settle with her yourself. Come, I will call them.

(MORTON *goes to the door, left, and opens it. He signs outside. The murderers enter. They are all armed with swords or daggers and cloaked. There are some ten or twelve of them, at the head of them* HOB OF ORMISTON, FAULDONSIDE, *and* SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS. *They stand whispering.*)

RUTHVEN. A goodly company. Come, sirs, all is ready.

DOUGLAS. Wait a minute, my lord. We must have warrant for this deed.

MORTON. You have the bond.

DOUGLAS. Ay, but on the bond two names are wanting —my lord of Moray's and the King's.

MORTON. Moray is not here, but he knows, and it has his approval. He will be here to-morrow. For the King—here is his warrant signed.

(*Shows the paper.*)

DOUGLAS. That would save no man's life.

MORTON. What would you, then ?

DOUGLAS. He must come with us. He must be so soiled with this man's blood that he cannot deny it.

MORTON. Be assured. He shall come.

DARNLEY. My lord——

MORTON (*turning to Darnley who has been standing apart*). Sire, they will insist. Would you wreck the matter now and bear the consequence without the deed ?

DARNLEY. You will stand by me, sirs. It is a fearful matter. It might be high treason.

FAULDONSIDE. 'Tis no treason to ease a foolish woman of her paramour.

RUTHVEN. Come, in God's name, dispatch. Will you go first, sir ?

DARNLEY (*fearfully*). I ? Should I appear in this in person, my lords ? I had not meant to.

FAULDONSIDE. Even as I thought. I for one do not stir on this errand.

DARNLEY. Surely it were better that I stand aside. She is my wife.

DOUGLAS. Sir, I will put the matter plainly. If you stand aside from the deed, it is likely you will seek to stand aside from the consequences. This is your quarrel. This is your wife, not ours. Unless you go, these honest gentlemen will not go either, and your insults remain unavenged. That is all there is to it.

MORTON. God's body, here is a coil about a jumping-jack of an Italian dancing-master ! What was it he called you, sire ? A headstrong boy ! I would have sliced his weasand on the word.

DARNLEY. And, by God, he shall pay for it ! You will stand by me, sirs ?

THE OTHERS. Ay, ay, we are all agreed.

DARNLEY. Then now I begin to reign. Come. No harm to the Queen. Who touches her dies.

FAULDONSIDE. The Queen must look after herself.

DARNLEY. No ; I will look after her.

(*He goes out into the arch leading to the stairway.* RUTHVEN *and the others follow him.* MORTON *stays below watching them. As they disappear, he goes over to the door, left, and speaks to the sentinel.*)

MORTON. Let no man pass, on peril of your life.

(*He goes out, left. The curtain falls.*)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

The scene is QUEEN MARY'S *chamber at Holyrood. It is a small room. There is a large window at present curtained in the left wall. At the back is a door. There is another smaller door in the angle of the back and right walls. As the curtain rises,* MARY, LADY ARGYLE, LORD ROBERT STUART, *and* RIZZIO *are discovered seated at a table playing cards.* STUART *is a middle-aged man.* ERSKINE, *a page of about twenty or less, is leaning over* RIZZIO'S *chair, watching the play.* RIZZIO *plays a card. There are wine-glasses on the table and a flagon of red wine on a small table at the side.*

MARY. He has all the cards. There, that's enough for to-night. He would beggar us if we went on.

LADY ARGYLE. You had better not love, sir. You will not be fortunate.

RIZZIO. Madam, I never do love—except myself.

MARY. Where is that letter, Davy ?

RIZZIO. I have it here, Madam. (*Producing a paper from his doublet.*) It is ready for your signature.

MARY. You think my sister will protect him ? You think she will not yield him up to me ?

LADY ARGYLE. What would you do with him if you got him in your hand ?

MARY. I think he knows well enough. What should we do with my lord of Moray, Davy, if we caught him ?

STUART. What does a King do with traitors ?

LADY ARGYLE. That is all very well, Madam, but the point is that you are a Queen and not a King. My lord of Moray is a big fish. If you catch him, will he not tear your net ? Besides, the man is after all your brother.

MARY. Is that any reason why I should love him ?

LADY ARGYLE. Not necessarily. But it is a reason why you should leave him alone. The man is broken.

MARY. What do you say, Davy ?

RIZZIO. Madam, I say let the letter go. There cannot be two kings in Scotland. If England will not yield him up, then you have a grievance, and that is always something to bargain with.

MARY. He is my brother.

RIZZIO. So was Cain Abel's.

MARY (RIZZIO *has produced pen and ink from his waistbelt and is waiting for her to sign. She is toying with the letter*). You think he really seeks my crown?

RIZZIO. Oh, not openly, Madam. That lord does nothing openly. Always he is looking from behind his fingers, and if there is ever anything to be done for which the doers might be called to account, you will find that he has some good excuse to be absent. A sick aunt, or a dying cousin, or some equally pious duty that you must honour him for attending. But he is none the less dangerous—and resolute.

LADY ARGYLE. If I were a King, I would do as the Turk does.

STUART. What is that?

LADY ARGYLE. Take off the heads of all the family when I ascended the throne. There should be an epidemic among the blood royal. If that had been done, my dear, well and good. Now it is more difficult.

RIZZIO. Madam, your sister will not yield him. You need have no fear of that. And if she does not, you have a grudge. A grudge will be most uncommon useful.

MARY (*signing*). There, then. Fie, man, you have spilled the wine.

(*In taking the signed paper,* RIZZIO *has knocked over one of the glasses and the wine pours on to the floor in a red stream.*)

RIZZIO. Pardon, Madam.

MARY (*shuddering.*) Wipe it up. It looks like blood there on the floor.

(ERSKINE *wipes it up with a napkin.*)

LADY ARGYLE. Oh, I dare say there has been blood shed here before now. Holyrood could tell strange tales.

RIZZIO. In my country, in one of the palaces they show such a stain. There was a murder done there by some Duke four hundred years ago. But they show a fresh stain, and fools come and gape at it lovingly, and marvel at the miracle.

LADY ARGYLE. You do not believe in miracles ?

RIZZIO. Me ? Why, no. I am a modern. Besides, I know the janitor of the palace. Daily he renews the stain with red ink.

STUART. What is that noise ?

MARY. 'Tis but the wind howling about the chimney-pots. 'Tis a wild night. Sing to me, Davy.

RIZZIO. What shall I sing, Madam ? Something sad ?

MARY. No, for God's sake ! This country is sad enough in itself without your trying to make it more so. Sing me a song of France—a ballade.

RIZZIO (*taking up his lute*). I will sing you a ballade of Master Francis Villon in praise of dead ladies.

LADY ARGYLE. Fie, sir, can you find no living woman to praise ?

RIZZIO. Only one, Madam, and I dare not sing of her.

MARY. Davy, I will give you another manor for that. One of Lord Moray's. In this country there are only two who ever pay me a compliment, yourself and Monsieur de Bothwell. You would think I had a hump on my back like a camel and a squint in my eye for all I ever get from anyone else. Play on, sir.

(RIZZIO *sings Villon's ballade, " Where is now Flora, the lovely Roman?" etc. As he approaches the conclusion of it, the door at the back opens and* DARNLEY *comes in, leaving the door half open. He comes across to* MARY. *She holds up a hand to him in welcome.*)

(DARNLEY *stands leaning over* MARY'S *chair, holding*

her hand listening to the song. As RIZZIO *finishes,* MARY *repeats the last words of the song dreamily.*)

MARY. " Where are the snows of yester year ? " (*Looking up at* DARNLEY) Have you forgiven me, my lord ?

DARNLEY. I am sorry, my Queen.

(*He stoops and kisses her. As he does so,* RUTHVEN *with the other murderers appear in the doorway.*)

STUART. Why, what is this ?

RIZZIO (*looking round and seeing his fate*). Ah ! O God, Madam !

MARY (*also starting to her feet*). What does this mean ?

RUTHVEN (*cold and pale, like a figure of fate, pointing to* RIZZIO, *who is shrinking behind the table*). He knows.

RIZZIO. Look at them—in the doorway. Save me, Madam, save me ! They seek my life.

(*He clutches at* MARY'S *skirts. The doorway is full of crowding men all armed with daggers. She faces them regally, pushing* DARNLEY, *who would hold her back, aside. Her own attendants have fallen back, terrified.*)

MARY. Stand back, sirs—stand back. You enter at your peril.

RIZZIO. I have no weapon. Give me a sword, one of you. Let me fight at least.

RUTHVEN. Madam, by your leave. Nay, then, without it. Come out of that.

(*He enters and lays his hand on* RIZZIO'S *shoulder. The others, crowding in behind him, fall on the doomed man like a pack of ravening wolves. In a second the whole room is one tumult.* RIZZIO *at* MARY'S *feet clutching her skirts, the others trying to drag him from her. Out of the turmoil rises the screams of* RIZZIO *and the shouts of his murderers. The whole scene should be brutal, savage.*)

RIZZIO. Madam, Madam, save me!

THE MURDERERS. Drag him forth, there!
Let go, you Italian devil!
Hale him out!
Out with him—out!

DARNLEY. Mary, you can't. You can do nothing.

MARY (*wildly*). Treason, treason! (*To* DARNLEY) Oh, are you a man that you can stand there with a sword by your side and do nothing? Help, treason, help!

RUTHVEN. Nay, then, give him the point. So.

(*Stabbing* RIZZIO. *The others also stab him.*)

RIZZIO. Ah-h-h-h.

(*They drag him from* MARY. FAULDONSIDE *pushes her into* DARNLEY'S *arms.*)

FAULDONSIDE. Here, she is your wife. Stop you her squalling.

DARNLEY. Mary, be sensible.

MARY. Sensible! Oh, is there no man in all Scotland to draw sword for me? Treason, treason!

FAULDONSIDE. Will you be silent?

(*Aiming a pistol at her breast. She falls back, cowed as much by what appears to her as sacrilege as by fear.*)

MARY. O God!

RUTHVEN. Carry him out, there. Is he dead?

FAULDONSIDE (*stooping over* RIZZIO). Dead as a dog.

RUTHVEN. Then is the hangman saved some trouble.

(*They carry* RIZZIO *out and disappear in the passage.* RUTHVEN *staggers to a chair and sits down.*)

RUTHVEN. Phew! 'twas warm work while it lasted. Who'd have thought he had so much fight in him. With your leave, Madam, I will sit. I am a sick man, and hardly suited to such a hurly-burly.

MARY (*shuddering; she is half mad with the shock*). Oh, the blood, the blood. Look. Look where it lies on the floor. Ah—it is on my dress. O God! I must change it—I must change it. It will never wash out, they say. Never. Never. Never.

DARNLEY. Hush, dear, hush.

RUTHVEN. So long as it is someone else's blood, Madam, and not your own, what does it matter? Give me some wine, you. (*To* ERSKINE.)

MARY. Oh, give it to him—give it to him. He will slay us else.

DARNLEY. You are distraught.

(*He tries to soothe her.* RUTHVEN *takes the glass of wine which* ERSKINE *gives him and drinks it. The others watch him, terrified.*)

MARY. Cover it up. For God's sake, cover it up or I shall go mad! It cries out to me from the ground. It smokes before heaven.

DARNLEY. Hush, dear, hush.

MARY. Why should I be quiet? I am the Queen. I am God's regent. I must answer for it to Him. See, see, the reek of it rises before His throne. Even now He bends and scents it—the blood of the sacrifice—the murdered blood crying aloud from the ground. Oh, hide it from Him—hide it.

RUTHVEN (*rising*). See you to her, my lord. I have other things to do. (*To the others*) And you, get you gone.

LADY ARGYLE. I am not afraid of you, my lord. This was a coward's deed. All Scotland shall say so when it hears of it.

RUTHVEN. Keep your tongue quiet or I will have it out by the roots.

DARNLEY. Go, Madam, go. Leave us alone.

RUTHVEN (*with a sneer*). As husband and wife should be.

Faith, a pretty picture. My lord, I wish you joy. I have the easier task.

(*They all go out, leaving* MARY *and* DARNLEY. LADY ARGYLE, STUART, *and* ERSKINE *go out by the smaller door,* RUTHVEN *by the larger.* MARY *sinks on to a chair and bursts into sobs.*)

DARNLEY. Mary. (*She does not answer. He puts his hand on her shoulder.*) Mary.

MARY (*shuddering*). Oh, do not touch me.

DARNLEY. Mary, I am sorry. I did not know——

(*She starts up regal once more.*)

MARY. Sorry! Out, traitor!

DARNLEY. I—I had no hand in this.

MARY. Traitor and liar too. You Judas! Was that kiss of yours the signal?

DARNLEY. I—I—Mary, they forced me to it.

MARY. A coward too. Can you not find the manhood to own your evil deeds? Is there nothing of the man in you?

DARNLEY. This man's offences were gross.

MARY. They have put that in your mouth, have they? Another lie, and you know it for one. For the sake of our unborn child—my child—I must bear with you, I must endure. Do you think I cannot see your purpose? You would slay it even in the womb. You are so jealous that you would not have him live, you would not have him reign. But he shall reign and wreak my vengeance on my enemies and his.

DARNLEY. You are mad.

MARY. I have been mad, but am mad no longer. Never again will I be wife to you. Never again will I accept your kisses that are the prelude to murder.

DARNLEY. You do not know what you say.

MARY. Beware of mine, my lord, for if I kiss again I kill—like my husband. O God, that I should say it!

DARNLEY. Nay, you will drive me too far.

MARY. Could I drive you further than you have sunk? Hearken, O God! I swear that never again shall this man be my husband in ought save name. Never again shall he mix his limbs with mine or lie clasped in my arms. No night shall bring him to me, no dawn shall wake him at my side.

DARNLEY. Mary!

MARY (*kneeling*). Dear God, listen to me. Let me not forget. Even in heaven, even in the flames of purgatory, let me remember this that he has done.

(*Her passion has altogether mastered his. He is afraid. He watches her fearfully. Her voice sinks to a low, solemn whisper.*)

See, dear God, I will swear it by—by the blood, the blood he shed before me to make barren the fruit of my womb—see, God, I kneel by it and cry to Thee—I and the murdered blood, the innocent blood, we cry to Thee—it is our sacrament——

(*She dips a finger in the stain and crosses herself with it.*)

DARNLEY (*appalled*). Mary—don't! Ah—you are ghastly!

MARY (*rising*). Have I frighted you, my lord? Oh, you are easily made afraid. (*She laughs hysterically. There is a knock at the door. At once again she is a woman, trembling, fearful.*) Hush! Who is that?

DARNLEY. I do not know. It must be Ruthven.

MARY. Do not let him enter—not that man, Henry. He is like Death himself, with his pale face and cruel mouth. (*Hysterically*) Do not let him come in. He will kill me. He will kill me.

DARNLEY (*shaking her off*). You are mad—hysterical.

(*He goes to the door and opens it.* RUTHVEN *is seen in the passage.* MARY *runs wildly to the window*

and, drawing back the curtains, opens it, and calls out of it.)

MARY. Help, help! Help, my lord provost! Help!

RUTHVEN. Get her from the window, man. They will tear her in pieces.

VOICES OUTSIDE. Adulteress! Wanton! The stake and the fire! Burn her! Burn her!

MARY. God, what is this?

RUTHVEN. Come back, Madam. They are not safe. You can never trust the many-headed.

MARY (*shrinking back from him*). Ah, do not touch me. Have you come to slay me too? Look—look, the blood! It drips from his hands in great gouts. O God! (*She shrinks back into a corner of the wall.*)

DARNLEY (*irresolutely*). What shall I do with her?

RUTHVEN. The woman is distraught. We were too hasty, sire. We should have managed better. It was too great a shock for her. Leave her to her ladies. I have news—bad news. We need your presence. Bothwell and Huntly are fled.

MARY. Bothwell?

DARNLEY. Escaped?

RUTHVEN. Ay. But Moray will be here to-morrow and on our side. Come you with me, sire. We will do well enough yet.

(*They move towards the door.* MARY *steals forward and touches* RUTHVEN *on the arm. He turns, astonished.*)

MARY. What—what have you done with him? What have you done with my servant?

RUTHVEN. He is already in the grave we digged for him in the vaults.

MARY (*fiercely*). There shall a fatter lie beside him ere the year is out.

RUTHVEN (*unlike* DARNLEY *he is not easily frightened*).

Then it will not be me, Madam. I am somewhat slimmer of body.

DARNLEY. Do not anger her further.

RUTHVEN. Nay, I meant nothing.

MARY. God shall judge you, my lord, and sooner.

RUTHVEN. I know my fate. To die in a strange country, with never a sight of the hills and the heather I have loved. What of it? To each man comes his fate with steady feet. Who shall avoid it? Come, my lord.

(*They go out, closing the door behind them.* MARY *stands watching them. From the inner smaller door comes a light knock.* MARY *goes to it fearfully and opens it.* PARIS *enters. He is a Frenchman of about thirty-five, humorous, sensible, bold.*)

PARIS. Hist, Madam.

MARY. What man are you?

PARIS. Speak low. I carry my life and my lord's life in my hands.

MARY. Who is your lord?

PARIS. Monsieur de Bothwell. I followed him from France. I bring word from him.

MARY. Speak.

PARIS. He foresaw this, but might not prevent it. They would have slain him. But he has broken loose and escaped their snares. Be of good cheer, Madam. He has sworn to free you from these lords, and I never knew that Monsieur swear anything that he did not sooner or later accomplish. Already he is gathering his power. This is his message. Do you seem submissive in all things to these men, even to your husband, though that is a hard thing to ask of any woman. Let them think nothing, and, in a day or two, my lord will devise some escape for you. Then will you have them in your hand, for they cannot stand

against him. For a sign he sends this ring (*giving it to her*).

MARY. There is, then, one man left in Scotland who is a man.

PARIS (*cheerfully*). Never a doubt of it, Madam. Many fair ladies could bear witness to that.

MARY. He is fickle, your master ?

PARIS. Nay, in this he will keep faith. Never have I seen him so moved.

MARY. He shall revenge me. Here (*taking a ring from her finger*), give him this. Tell him I will do as he says, and, if chance serves, I will write.

PARIS. Better not write too much, Madam.

MARY. What mean you by that ?

PARIS. He gets a sight of love-letters from ladies. I do not think he reads them. But others may. Letters are dangerous.

MARY. You are bold, sir. Who said I loved your master ?

PARIS. Why else should great ladies write to a man, Madam !

MARY. At least he is a man. Take you my message. Quick ! Someone comes.

PARIS. They will not find me. There are more ways than the one out of Holyrood. I'm for the roofs.

(*He goes out by the same door.* MARY *looks at the ring, kisses it, and puts it in her bosom. Then, going across to a* prie-Dieu *which stands against the wall, kneels at it. The curtain falls.*)

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

The scene is the torture-chamber in the Tolbooth prison in Edinburgh. A low, dark-vaulted room, with one entrance only, a door in the left wall. In the right wall are two

small windows, high up and barred, which light the place faintly. In addition there are lamps on the walls. There is no furniture in the room except a wooden table with chairs at it. At the back is a deep alcove in a large arch. This is at present covered by a heavy curtain. There is a sentinel at the door. The curtain rising, discovers MORAY *and* LETHINGTON *sitting at the table, on which are scattered a number of papers.* MORAY *is reading one of these. He lays it down.*

MORAY. This Hob or Hab has confessed, then ?

LETHINGTON. More than he ever did. Another turn of the thumbscrews and he would have owned to every treason planned in the last twenty years. I suppose we must torture men, but the rack is a poor engine for extracting truth.

MORAY. He has deserved it.

LETHINGTON. So have my lords Ruthven and Morton, and will taste the same medicine if they return to this country.

MORAY. Is she so hot against them ?

LETHINGTON. Yes, and no. For the present she is hot on the one thing only.

MORAY. And what may that be ?

LETHINGTON. My lord, you know as well as I do. And if you do not, you can guess far better. Nothing is hid from you. We others have to grope in the dark.

MORAY. So have we all. What is the meaning of this play she has appointed here ? Can you see into the heart of that, my lord ?

LETHINGTON. I think so. Has she not summoned the King to hear this man's confession ?

MORAY. Yes.

LETHINGTON. Then it is clear. The Young Fool——

MORAY. You mean the King ?

LETHINGTON. Mine is the best name for him, Lord Moray. He pledged these men his word. He gave them assurance of safety. Otherwise Rizzio would have

been alive to-day. They dared not have moved without it.

MORAY. Have they aught in writing ?

LETHINGTON. Not these. But Morton has, my lord. I have seen the paper.

MORAY. A bond ?

LETHINGTON. Yes. A bond to cut the late lamented Davy's throat, and His Majesty's the first signature on it. Now see her purpose. This Hob confesses as much in his presence, with her looking at him with those deep sidelong eyes of hers that seem to read his soul. What can he do ? If he admits, what saves him from the same doom that she will mete out to them ? If he denies, what saves him from the Douglases whom he betrays ? You see the way of it ? Either way she has him like a bird in a springe.

MORAY. And then ?

LETHINGTON. He will deny. He is as weak as water. He would deny his own father if need be. And so will doom himself. The Douglas will not let him live long after that. Then she is free, and if you or I do aught, my lord, she shakes this Hepburn, this Bothwell, out of her pocket at us. 'Tis why she keeps him there. He is her vengeance upon Scotland.

MORAY. I too think she means vengeance.

LETHINGTON. What Queen would not, being treated as they have treated her ? Sir, when first she came, this was a girl, free, unsuspecting, open as the day. She is a girl no longer. Look at the pale, proud face and deep-lidded eyes of her. She has walked in strange places, my lord, and held converse with strange spirits since that night at Holyrood. Now is she Clytemnestra weaving the net. Her feet go down to death. God pity Scotland, for the feet of many men must follow her.

MORAY. These things are in the hand of God, Michael. We cannot alter them.

LETHINGTON. Can God alter them ?

MORAY. Ay, there's the mystery.

(*He turns again to the papers.* DARNLEY *enters.* MORAY *and* LETHINGTON *rise.*)

DARNLEY. So. You are here too, sirs.

MORAY. As you see, sir.

DARNLEY. The Queen sent for me. What is it we are to do ?

LETHINGTON. We have no knowledge. We were also summoned.

DARNLEY (*nervously*). Has it to do with the trial of Morton's men ?

MORAY. My lord, we do not know. No man knows the Queen's mind these days save Bothwell only. He is everything.

DARNLEY (*sitting*). This is the torture-chamber, is it not ? We seem to have gained little by our plot, Lord James. We have deposed King Log and set King Stork over us.

MORAY. 'Twas no plot of mine, sir.

DARNLEY (*laughing contemptuously*). Well, thank God, I am no coward to do a thing and yet not do it, to pick the profit and avoid the danger. Take you heed of King Stork, my lord of Moray. He has a sharp beak for lands that have been unfairly come by.

MORAY (*indignantly*). Do you mean that I have come unfairly by my lands and titles, sir ?

DARNLEY (*sneering*). No, no. Only that you have more than an honest man might be expected to acquire. But then, of course, you started with an advantage, though 'twas on the wrong side of the blanket.

MORAY (*starting up furiously*). My lord, you will answer for those words.

DARNLEY. You are insolent.

MORAY. I will not be called coward and thief by a foolish boy.

DARNLEY (*also starting up and drawing his dagger*). Now, death and wounds, I will show you if I am a boy. Draw, sir, draw.

(BOTHWELL, *who has entered during the quarrel, comes forward and confronts* DARNLEY.)

BOTHWELL. Stop! My lord, Kings do not fight with their subjects. Put up your weapon.

DARNLEY. Who are you to give me orders?

BOTHWELL. You had better keep your breath, sir, to cool your own porridge. You'll find them hot enough, I'll warrant.

DARNLEY. What do you mean?

BOTHWELL. I do not like to see any man run into danger unawares. See here, my lord. The Queen comes to try these men who were your weapons against Davy.

DARNLEY. They were no men of mine.

BOTHWELL. That's as it may be. Take you care that in trying them she does not try you.

LETHINGTON (*to* MORAY). Even as I said. He knows her mind.

DARNLEY. Me? I am the King.

BOTHWELL. My lord, you would do better if you remembered that more often. Here is Her Majesty.

(MARY *enters. She is followed by two pages, who take station beside the door. She is dressed in black. She comes across to the table and sits.*)

MARY. My lords, you may be seated. Henry, you shall sit here beside me and help me judge these traitors. Whose is the deposition?

LETHINGTON (*taking up a paper*). Black Hob of Ormiston.

MARY. Hob? Was he not a runner?

LETHINGTON. Ay, Madam, a runner of Lord Morton's.

MARY. I remember him. A swarthy, lissom man. When I first came from France he ran beside my horse, throwing up his cap. I liked him for that. What

evil counsel brought him within reach of the gallows ? Read on, sir.

LETHINGTON (*reading from the paper*). "Asked what it was made him take part in the killing, the prisoner would not answer, so was put to the torture."

MARY. Torture ? Ah ! Four months ago I would not willingly have hurt a fly. See what men have brought me to, Henry. Read on, sir.

LETHINGTON (*reading*). "At the first wedge he remained obstinate, but on the second being introduced he screamed and confessed that he had indeed taken part in the killing of Master Rizzio under the orders of the Lord Morton—and the King."

DARNLEY. It is a lie !

MARY. Call you this a confession ? Why, this is worse treason still to make the King a partner in their beastly deeds. Read on, sir. Read on.

LETHINGTON. "Being asked how he knew the King for art and part in this business, the prisoner was silent, but on being again put to the torment did confess that he had seen a bond for the murder signed by the King and other lords."

MARY. Oh, monstrous lie ! It is a lie, Henry ?

DARNLEY. Of course. Why do you ask me ? I am not on my trial.

MARY. Nay, you are the Judge. I will show you why I ask.

(*She rings a small bell on the table. Suddenly the heavy curtain at the back of the stage is lifted. The scene disclosed is a terrible one, and has been deliberately devised by the* QUEEN *with a view to its effect on* DARNLEY'S *nerves. At the back in a recess in the wall is a fire of glowing coals with strange-shaped pincers thrust into it. This is the only light in the recess. In one corner is the rack, for this is the actual torture-chamber.*

But it is not at these horrid implements that DARNLEY *looks. In the centre is a rough stool or bench. On this is seated a man,* HOB OF ORMISTON, *the criminal, his accomplice, who has just undergone the torture. His face is ghastly. About his legs is the wooden boot, and in this a wedge has been inserted ready for the fresh torture designed for the criminal. Three men stand about him, two torturers dressed in black livery and a doctor, who at present has his fingers on the victim's pulse. One of the executioners is holding him or supporting him on the stool. The other stands leaning on the mallet with which he is to crush the wooden wedges between the boot and the man's legs. At the dreadful sight* DARNLEY, *unable to control himself, starts up with a shrill scream like a woman's.*)

DARNLEY. God, what is this ?

MARY (*her voice sinks to a low, tense whisper*). This is that Hob of Ormiston on whom you sit in judgment. He has been on the rack. I do not think he will ever run again or throw up his cap for me, for the bones of his legs are crushed.

(*She keeps her eyes on* DARNLEY'S *face. The lords watch them curiously.* MARY *speaks to the surgeon.*)

Is the man revived, sir ? Speak.

DOCTOR. Madam, he is conscious.

MARY (*to the prisoner*). Listen, thou traitor. Here is that King whom you have slandered and befouled with lies worse even than the treason to which you have confessed. Speak then to his face, and be careful how you speak, for if you lie I have no mercy on you. Had you his warrant for this deed you did ?

HOB OF ORMISTON (*faintly ; he can hardly speak, being*

utterly broken by the torture which he has suffered). Ay. We—we had his warrant.

DARNLEY. Mary, it is not true. Why, in God's name, have you brought me to this dreadful place ? I will not stay.

MARY (*sternly*). You must. (*To the prisoner*) You hear ? The King denies it. He will not be a party to your lies. How should he ? Would a King conspire with such as you to kill the servant of the wife whom he has sworn to love and cherish ?

MORAY (*endeavouring to interfere*). Sister, you cannot do this. It is not seemly.

MARY. Hold your peace, sir. (*To* HOB) What was this warrant ?

HOB. A—a paper—oh-h-h. (*He is in fearful pain.*)

MARY. Signed ?

HOB. Ay. I—I—saw his name there.

MARY. You hear the devilish malice of their lies, Henry ? Speak. Tell the traitor he lies.

DARNLEY (*irresolute, terrified*). I—I—cannot. Not here. I am not well. Let me go.

HOB (*wildly*). Sire, you know that I speak truth. It was no treason to free the kingdom of this scourge, this leech of Italy. Speak for us, my lord, or we are undone, and we trusted in you.

MARY (*grimly*). Is it not written, " Put not your trust in princes " ?

HOB. Ay, but we trusted him. Speak, my lord—speak. You are the King.

MARY. Will you answer him, my lord ?

DARNLEY. Why should I answer every runagate knave that bears false witness ? Am I on my trial ?

MARY. Perhaps.

(*That word " Perhaps," spoken coldly and with intent, shows him the danger within which he stands.*)

DARNLEY. It is a lie. I signed no bond—no warrant.

HOB. Judas!

MARY. You are quite sure, my lord? Think well. For if this is a lie, then must the man be put to the torture again. (*She signs to the torturer, who raises his mallet.*)

HOB. Ah—no—no. For God's sake! For the love of Christ! I—I cannot bear it again. Oh, kill me rather and end it.

MARY. Think well, my lord.

DARNLEY. Mary! Oh, you are pitiless.

MARY. Yes; I think I am. It is strange. In France I was not pitiless. You are sure, my lord?

DARNLEY (*stubbornly*). It is a lie.

MARY (*to the torturer*). Strike.

(*He raises his mallet, but the sight is too much for the prisoner. Utterly broken, utterly cowed, he will say or do anything to avoid more pain. He screams out in agony.*)

HOB. No—no. Oh, wait—a moment till I speak——

(*At a sign from* MARY *the man stands with the mallet poised.*)

I confess—I confess all, anything. All I have said is false.

MARY. The King was no party to this bond?

HOB. No, no.

MARY. The signature you saw was forged?

HOB. Yes.

MARY. By my lord of Morton?

HOB. I—I fear so.

MARY. Do you not know? Shall the man strike again?

HOB. No, no. Oh, have pity, for the love of God! Yes, it was forged by him. I—I saw him do it.

MARY. Ah! It is well for you that you have spoken the truth. That answer has saved your life. For that

you ran beside me to greet me when I came from France and threw your cap in the air for me, I pardon you.

DARNLEY. Pardon? The man is a manifest and confessed traitor.

MARY (*taking no notice of him*). For that and that, you may go to my Lord Morton, where he lies hid in England, and tell him that you have met the King face to face, and that he throws the lie in your master's teeth.

DARNLEY (*he sees the danger*). Mary!

MARY. You understand? You will tell him?

HOB (*grinding his teeth*). Oh, be sure I will tell him. All—all.

MARY. Take him away and see to his wounds. Then set him free, and have him put across the Borders.

DARNLEY. Mary—I——

MARY (*to* BOTHWELL). See to it, my lord.

(BOTHWELL *steps within the alcove. The curtain is lowered again.*)

And do you leave us, my lords.

(MORAY *and* LETHINGTON *go out. As he passes,* MORAY *speaks to the* QUEEN. DARNLEY *has sunk on to a chair, overcome by the scene which has just passed.*)

MORAY. Sister, you drive him to despair.

MARY. Has he not driven me there first, James?

(*As the door closes behind the lords,* DARNLEY *looks up.*)

DARNLEY. You know what you are doing, Madam? You wish to kill me as Rizzio was killed?

MARY. Why do you think that?

DARNLEY. That man—you set him free. Will he not go to Morton? Will he not tell him that I denied this, and that on my denial rests his own attainder? They will kill me, murder me like a dog. You know the Douglas.

MARY. What would you have me do ?

DARNLEY (*eagerly*). He must die. He must not tell Morton.

MARY. You would have me revoke a pardon once granted.

DARNLEY. There is no need. He can die secretly.

MARY (*with a shudder of disgust*). Ah, you counsel that—you ?

DARNLEY (*sullenly*). He is an admitted traitor.

MARY. Nay. He has done one good thing at least. He has sworn that my husband, whom I love and trust, had no part in this plot. For that he shall go free.

DARNLEY. Then you doom me as surely as you pardon him.

MARY. Why ? If this was false, what grudge have the Douglases against you ?

DARNLEY. They will not think it false.

MARY. Then it is true ?

DARNLEY. No—no—but they have reasons. I was in your chamber when this man was slain, having come there by accident. All knew my hatred of him. Oh, I was a fool.

MARY (*bitterly*). The Young Fool—they call you that, do they not ?

DARNLEY. What do you mean ?

MARY. Look, my lord ! Know you that paper ?

(*She produces the bond for* RIZZIO's *murder which* DARNLEY *has signed in Act II, Scene* I.)

DARNLEY. God—the bond——

MARY. Ay—the bond. Whose signature is that, my lord ?

DARNLEY (*wildly*). This was a snare, then ?

MARY. Yes. And you are caught in it. Lord Morton sent me that. Oh, coward and traitor, that would plot treason and not stand by it. Small wonder that wretch called you Judas. See, there is the chair he

sat in. Shall I call the doomsman back to strap my husband to the rack?

DARNLEY (*his assurance is now utterly broken*). Mary, for the love of Christ (*on his knees*), have pity. I was misled. I did not know.

MARY. Pity! I think my veins are drained of it. (*Shuddering.*) Nay, I am fearful for my child that is unborn lest he should suck the iron from my breasts. Get up. Would you have Bothwell see you there?

DARNLEY (*rising*). What—what do you mean to do?

MARY. I? Nothing. If you want pity, my lord, seek it from the Douglas, from my Lord Morton. I have sent for him.

DARNLEY. You have sent for him?

MARY. I have pardoned him too. Shall there be one law for my husband and another for—for other murderers?

DARNLEY. Then am I doomed. You loved me once.

MARY. You know best how that love was killed, my lord.

(*She rings the bell on the table.* BOTHWELL *enters from the torture-chamber.*)

DARNLEY. Mary!

MARY. For God's sake go and hide your dishonour in some wench's arms. You do not know how that empty chair tempts me.

(DARNLEY *goes out.* BOTHWELL stands waiting.)

MARY. Well, sir? What do you think now?

BOTHWELL (*shrugging his shoulders*). The man is made that way. This was a pretty scene you staged for us, Madam. (*He is a little contemptuous.*) Had I known, I doubt if you would have seen James Hepburn at it.

MARY. Why, sir, you are pale. Are you afraid?

BOTHWELL. No man or woman ever saw me afraid. But when I fight, it is with clean weapons, under God's sky, and the devil take the weakest. I like not your dungeons and this twisting of men's nerves and sinews

till you make the bravest of us cowards. I knew this man Hob. He was as brave as myself. It gave me a scunner to see him there, broken and crushed, crying for pity. Ah, 'twas cruel.

(MARY *drops her head on her hands, giving way to the inevitable reaction. She cannot control her sobs. He comes to her and lays his hand on her shoulder.*)

BOTHWELL. Don't cry, *ma mie*. He is not worth your tears.

MARY (*wildly*). Oh, Bothwell, be nice to me. Make me forget. Make me laugh, make love to me, only make me forget. You cannot think how utterly miserable I am. That chair. That wretched man, moaning over his crushed limbs. Oh, I would not hurt a fly, I would not scold a serving-maid if I were not half mad and driven to it. . I am not like that. I am not cruel by nature.

BOTHWELL. My dear, you are but a girl. Do you think I do not know that ?

MARY. Had any girl ever such a girlhood ? I am a Queen, and my people hate me and cry out at me in the streets. I am a wife, and my husband is a fool and a coward. (*Looking up.*) Bothwell, I hate him. Dear God, how I hate him ! Would he were dead. Shall I tell you something ? I have called back the Douglases. He is afraid of them.

BOTHWELL. Small wonder.

MARY (*hysterically*). Do you think they will kill him, Bothwell ? Oh, I hope they will kill him.

BOTHWELL. Hush, dear, hush.

MARY. Yes, yes. Comfort me, Bothwell. Pet me. It is so long since anyone has petted me. Oh, how I love your hands ! They are so strong, so brave. They make me feel safe. (*Stroking his hands.*)

BOTHWELL. Mary !

MARY. Ah, do not call me that. He calls me that.

BOTHWELL (*playing with her hair*). What shall I call you, then ?

MARY. Speak French to me. I was happy in France.

BOTHWELL. Marie. (*He stoops to kiss her.*)

MARY. No, no, my lord. I am your Queen.

BOTHWELL. Nay, no queen, Marie, but a girl — a girl hungry for love.

MARY (*yielding*). Oh, my dear, my dear!

(*He kisses her. The curtain falls.*)

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE 1

The scene is a room in Hermitage Castle. It is furnished plainly, but there are rich silk hangings and tapestry on the walls. A lamp of Oriental design is hung from the roof. BOTHWELL *is lying on a bed or divan strewn with bright-coloured cushions of silk. The bed is in the right corner. In the back wall are two small windows deeply embrasured. There is a heavy wooden door in the left wall.* BOTHWELL *is reading in an old black letter-book. His head is bandaged. A few seconds after the rise of the curtain the door, left, opens and a* PAGE *enters.*

THE PAGE. My lord, the leech has come.

BOTHWELL. That damned blood-sucker. Let him come in. I am tired of my own company, and do you stay by the door.

(*The* PAGE *signs outside, and the* LEECH *or* SURGEON *enters—an old wizened man with an irritating trick of chuckling after each sentence. He bows as he comes forward. He carries the basin and lancet which in those days were the sign of a medical man, as the stethoscope is now.*)

BOTHWELL. Well, sir, what nauseous nostrum have you to-day ? What do you carry there ? A lancet ?

SURGEON. 'Tis for phlebotomy, my lord.

BOTHWELL. I am not going to be bled. You may take that as settled. Have I not lost enough blood over this cursed reiver ?

SURGEON. In fevers, especially fevers resulting from a wound such as your lordship's, the letting of two or three ounces of blood daily is ever found most efficacious.

BOTHWELL. A hair of the dog that bit one, eh ?

SURGEON. Even as your lordship says.

BOTHWELL. I cured the dog that bit me by much the same method.

SURGEON. He, he, he ! You let his blood, sir ?

BOTHWELL. So many ounces that he is not likely to bite anyone again unless it is in hell. But I will not have you operate on me in the same fashion, sir.

SURGEON. My lord, the blood being heated by fever, as it were, boils in the veins. If not reduced, it will issue in all sorts of evil humours.

BOTHWELL. They would be nothing to my evil humour.

SURGEON. It is the common remedy.

BOTHWELL. Would you apply common remedies to me ?

SURGEON. He, he, he ! My lord, you may be a lord, you may even, one of these days, be something more, but nature made your body much like that of other men. She knows not your distinctions of common and uncommon. If I had you on my dissecting-table—he, he, he—I could prove it. Though not, of course, to your lordship. He, he, he !

BOTHWELL. You ghoul ! You surgeons are like the vampires, and feed on corpses.

SURGEON. Alas, no ! Even in these times of civil discord, my lord, the supply is never equal to the demand.

BOTHWELL. Well, sir, come, prescribe for me !

SURGEON. Then must the uninitiated leave us alone. *Odi profanum vulgus*, as Master Horace says.

(BOTHWELL *signs to the* PAGE, *who goes out, closing the door.*)

BOTHWELL. You are like the priests. You always talk Latin when the argument goes against you.

SURGEON. Truly we are priests, though our deity is *Natura naturans*, not God, whom man has vainly created in his own image. Have I your leave, sir? (*Feeling his pulse.*) Ay, you will do well enough. For a day or two you must starve. No meat, no wine.

BOTHWELL. Have done with this foolery! We are alone.

SURGEON. Nay, if you want to talk of other matters than medicine, I will even bolt the door. (*Does so.*)

BOTHWELL. Have you brought it?

SURGEON. Oh, I have brought it. You know my opinion of it. 'Tis childish, a toy to please the ignorant. He, he, he!

BOTHWELL. Show it to me.

SURGEON. He, he! That is why I brought my paraphernalia (*hunting in the bundle he carries*). If this were found in my bundle, I should go up in flames like the prophet Elijah. It would mean the stake.

(*He extracts from his bundle a small figure made of wax—one of those images used in the Middle Ages in magic. It is shaped roughly like a man and has a rough crown.* BOTHWELL *takes it and studies it. He laughs shortly.*)

BOTHWELL. 'Tis not much of a likeness.

SURGEON. 'Twill serve. The infernal deities will not mind. Besides, my lord, you perceive the crown. It is obviously a King. Even though it is the Crown Matrimonial only.

BOTHWELL. What do I do with this?

SURGEON. According to the books?

BOTHWELL. Yes.

SURGEON. I have performed all the necessary charms and incantations—at midnight—with the Devil in close attendance, specially summoned from hell, he, he, he! Here is your enemy, my lord, delivered into your hands. You may do what you please with him, and

your cruelty will be reproduced on the flesh and blood original. Waste this before a slow fire, and His Majesty——

BOTHWELL. He has no right to the title.

SURGEON. He will enjoy it for so short a time that we may give it to him. Waste this before a fire, and he will suffer from a devouring fever. Pierce it with pins, and he will have heart-burn and pains in all his limbs. Blow it up with powder, and he will be struck as by a thunderbolt.

BOTHWELL. What made you think of powder ?

SURGEON. 'Tis mentioned as a suitable process in the books.

BOTHWELL. It would be sudden—and safe. You do not believe in this magic ?

SURGEON. He, he, he ! I believe in nothing that I have not seen and proved. If I wished to—to remove an inconvenient competitor I should apply my remedies to his own person, not to a simulacrum.

BOTHWELL (*raising himself on his elbow*). We will try this first. Here, give me a pin.

SURGEON (*he hands* BOTHWELL *a pin, which he takes from his bundle.* BOTHWELL *thrusts this through the figure's foot*). He, he !—*experimentum fiat.*

BOTHWELL. There. That should give him gout, according to you.

SURGEON. My lord, he will now suffer damnably in the big toe.

BOTHWELL. And if this fails ?

SURGEON. My lord, I have a powder—the white powder of the Borgias from Italy.

BOTHWELL. Rizzio told me of it. Have you it here ?

SURGEON. I can bring it. 'Tis very costly.

BOTHWELL. Deuce take the cost ! Bring it next time you come. You can go now.

SURGEON. You will be careful, my lord. If that were found . . .

BOTHWELL (*hiding the image in his bedclothes*). It will not be found.

SURGEON. He, he!

BOTHWELL. You think it will not work?

SURGEON. 'Tis but an image. It is the will to kill that kills, my lord, not the silly incantations chanted over this image. This is but a symbol of the will which is the greatest power in nature. In the East I have heard of men whose mere wish was so powerful that they could slay with it as with the thunderbolt. We are told that we can remove mountains by faith, and there is surely nothing impossible in the removal of dignities, peers, and—princes by the same power. He, he, he! I may go, my lord?

(*Opens the door.* PARIS *is standing outside.*)

BOTHWELL. Yes. Who is that at the door?

SURGEON. Paris, my lord.

BOTHWELL. Paris, and you stand here prating. Go and send him here at once.

SURGEON. He, he, he! Here is the symptom of a disease that even I may not cure.

BOTHWELL. What do you mean, fool?

SURGEON. Love, my lord, love. With a heigh, with a ho, with a heigh nonny no. When once the feathered arrow from Cupid's quiver sticks in a man's heart my spells are useless. In that fire you may melt faster than the toy I gave you.

BOTHWELL. Begone, fool, and send him here.

SURGEON. I go, my lord, I go. With a heigh, with a ho . . .

(*He goes out.* PARIS *enters immediately.*)

BOTHWELL. What have you? A message?

PARIS. A letter, my lord.

BOTHWELL. Quick, give it to me! Tell me, how did she look—what did she say? Did she speak of me?

PARIS. Indeed, she spoke of nothing else.

BOTHWELL (*taking the letter*). Ah, sweet, sweet! It breathes the very perfume of her.

PARIS. Ay, they all have the trick of that.

BOTHWELL. What the devil do you mean?

PARIS. They buy it in bottles. A drop or two on a handkerchief or a letter, and you'd think it came from Madam Venus herself. But 'tis not natural. No, no.

BOTHWELL. Peace, fool. What other news have you? The King—where is he? What does he do?

PARIS. Nothing.

BOTHWELL. Nothing?

PARIS. It is the privilege of Kings. He is gone to Glasgow in disgrace. 'Tis said he means to leave the country. They would not even have him at the child's christening.

BOTHWELL. That was my counsel.

PARIS. The common people murmured at it.

BOTHWELL. Bah! Who cares for the common people?

PARIS. It is true that in France we do not. But here they are made of different stuff, my lord.

(*A flourish of trumpets outside.* BOTHWELL starts *up in bed.*)

BOTHWELL. What is that? Look.

PARIS (*looks out of window*). *Nom de Dieu!* It is the Queen, my lord.

BOTHWELL. The Queen?

PARIS. Yes, on horseback. The Lord Moray is with her, and other lords. They dismount. She is coming here.

BOTHWELL. Give me that cloak—quick; she must not see me like this.

(PARIS *hands him the cloak. As he wraps himself in it,* MARY *appears at the door. She is arguing with someone outside.*)

MARY. Nay, but I will see him. (*Entering.*) Oh, my lord.

(*Utterly regardless of appearances, she runs across and kneels beside the bed.*)

BOTHWELL. Madam! (*To* PARIS) Go, fool, and close the door. Do not stand there gaping like a trout out of water. See that no one enters.

(PARIS *goes out.*)

BOTHWELL. Was this not dangerous, my Queen? What will they think?

MARY. I thought you killed.

BOTHWELL. I am not so easy killed, *ma mie.*

MARY. But you are hurt—sorely hurt, they said.

BOTHWELL. Nay, 'tis only a scratch. A border ruffian, one of the Elliots. He will not scratch anyone again, unless it is the good St. Peter for denying him entrance to Paradise.

MARY. How you frightened me. When a woman loves, my lord, always is she fearful. Fate lurks for her in every letter, at every turn of the road, lying in wait to plot against her happiness.

BOTHWELL. There, there. I am all right, my Queen. It was nothing. I shall be on horseback in a day or two.

MARY. Oh, my dear, my dear, I thought you dead! Before I could see you or speak. I thought life ended for me. Kiss me, dear. Kiss me.

(*He kisses her.*)

BOTHWELL. How did you come? Was it not dangerous?

MARY. May not a Queen visit her faithful soldier wounded in her cause?

BOTHWELL. Yes; but not alone.

MARY. Oh, I am not alone. James is with me.

BOTHWELL. Your brother ?

MARY. Yes. Oh, he approved. He thought it a worthy tribute to your valour, my bravest knight.

BOTHWELL (*frowning*). If he approved, 'twas not for that reason. He does not love me.

MARY. Ah, don't let us talk politics. See. I have an hour. Only an hour to love you. That is all the time Queens can spare for love, sir.

BOTHWELL. Faith, I'm not in much condition to make love.

MARY (*gaily*). Then I will not be a Queen or even a lover, but a nurse to bring you back to health, and make you take your draught when you will not, like a naughty child.

BOTHWELL. Am I a baby to refuse medicine because it is nasty ?

MARY. All men are babies to a woman who loves. Especially when they are sick. Which is it, sir ? (*Fingering the medicines on the table beside the bed.*) The gallipot ? (*She takes it up.* BOTHWELL *puts his arm round her waist. She holds up a threatening finger.*) Now, you must be good. Sick men are not allowed to make love to their nurses. It is a heinous offence.

BOTHWELL. They always do it. 'Tis well known.

MARY (*jealous*). Have you a nurse here that you make love to, sir ? Is it your wife ?

BOTHWELL. You baby ! You know she is not here. You would make a good nurse, Mary.

MARY. Oh, my dear, my dear, why can't I do it always ? Why can't I sit beside your bed and watch you while you sleep and hush you when you wake ? Oh, what a miserable thing life is.

(*Falling beside the bed on her knees, she buries her face on his breast, weeping.*)

BOTHWELL. Hush, *ma mie*, hush. Suppose James heard you.

MARY. James would not understand. He is good. He thinks love must follow the priest's blessing and cannot come without it.

BOTHWELL. It must be dreadfully dull to be as good as James.

MARY. You need not fear that fate, sir. Oh, but he is right and we are wrong. Deep down in my heart I know that, and it makes me miserable. This love of ours is mortal sin, my lord, and 'twas I that tempted you.

BOTHWELL. Would you sin for me, Mary?

MARY. Have I not sinned already?

BOTHWELL. I do not think God so blind.

MARY. Ah, do not speak of Him. It makes me fear even to think of Him. God is not mocked, my lord. Mr. Knox said that to me. You remember?

BOTHWELL. 'Tis not so easy as Mr. Knox would have us think. Why did God allow this marriage of yours that is no marriage? What did you know of the King when you wedded him, or of love?

MARY. Little enough. What does any girl know of the man she weds?

BOTHWELL. Ay, but God knew. Therefore the fault, if there is a fault, is His. If there is a flaw in the weaving, surely it is the weaver who makes it, not the threads.

MARY. Perhaps. If there is a God at all. Sometimes I wonder. Often since I have come to this country I wonder. They all talk of Him. Their ministers preach hell-fire and death and judgment, and yet they cheat, and steal, and murder. Rizzio—poor harmless Davy—Morton did that—Morton and James, my brother. He thinks it hidden, but I know. And yet they go to church and are great men with Mr. Knox. He too—he wanted it. Poor Davy! He trusted me and I failed him.

BOTHWELL. The King too wanted it.

MARY. Why do you speak of him?

BOTHWELL. I am jealous, Mary. He is your husband.

MARY. Never since that night. I swore to him then that never again would I lie in his arms or be wife to him or let him touch me.

BOTHWELL. And you have kept the promise ?

MARY. How can you ask ? Do you not know where my heart is ? I have given it away, and none but you know, my lord.

BOTHWELL. I wonder sometimes if you have a heart, *ma mie*. Where do you keep it, this wonderful gift of yours ?

MARY. Shall I show you ? Here, my lord. Here it lies, soft and warm, beating against yours. Can you not feel how it flutters ?

BOTHWELL. Some day it shall lie there for ever.

MARY. No. Life does not hold such happiness for us. But for an hour, only one short hour, it can nestle there. That is all fate gives us. Oh, my dear, my dear !

BOTHWELL. Mary !

(*He clasps her in his arms and she lies there. Presently her mood alters. Under the bedclothes she feels the figure which he has hidden there. Her curiosity is awakened.*)

MARY. What a baby you are. What toy have you in bed with you, my lord ? Oh, I believe it is a doll. Cannot you sleep without a doll, sir ?

BOTHWELL. No. You must not see that. It is a secret.

MARY. You are not allowed to have secrets from me. I believe it is the likeness of some other woman. No, I will see it.

(*She succeeds in dragging the doll out from under the bedclothes in spite of* BOTHWELL'S *efforts to prevent her. At once she realises its deadly import.*)

No. You are not to fight with your nurse. It is not allowed.

(*She sees the doll. She stares at it with horrified eyes.*)

God! Oh!

BOTHWELL. 'Tis only a foolish toy. Why do you look so strangely at it?

MARY. Ah, I have seen another like it, before, in France. They—they killed La Mole for just such a figure. It too had a robe and crown. It—it was the King and he—he sought to kill him—by witchcraft. Oh, my lord, my lord, what does it mean?

BOTHWELL (*with a short laugh*). Is not the meaning clear?

MARY. You would kill him?

BOTHWELL. The whole of Scotland would kill him. We have no use for him. He is better dead. Did not Lethington tell you as much at Craigmillar?

MARY. Was that his meaning?

BOTHWELL. What else? Oh, we are not alone in that wish. Morton is with us, Argyle, Huntly, even your brother.

MARY. James?

BOTHWELL. He will not take part. He will look through his fingers as usual. But he knows. Never doubt that.

MARY. But—but—this. (*Holding out the doll.*) James would never . . .

BOTHWELL (*with a sudden explosion of laughter*). Oh, not that way. That is a ploy of my own. An experiment. Mr. Knox would burn me for that if he saw it.

MARY. Are you not afraid?

BOTHWELL. Ay; afraid that it will not work, and that we shall be put to the trouble of devising surer means. Do you try. You are nearer him in blood than I, and the books hold that a matter of moment. Here is a

pin. It would be interesting to see if it made any difference.

MARY (*she is horribly shocked by the cold-blooded way in which he speaks*). Good God, no! Would you have me kill him?

BOTHWELL (*ruthlessly*). Let us face facts. Would you not kill him if you had the power?

MARY (*indignantly*). No.

BOTHWELL. You do not love me, then?

MARY. Ah, my lord, do not ask that of me. Ask anything, anything, only not that.

BOTHWELL (*slowly, deliberately*). Mary, I do ask it.

MARY. Would you make me a murderess?

BOTHWELL. No, but a Queen again. Must you be tied all your young life to this drunken sot? Must you suffer all your days for his folly? Daily he deceives you; daily he seeks to betray you. Nay, he has even plotted your life.

MARY. My life?

BOTHWELL. We have sure proof. In his own hand. Will you always stand between him and the punishment he has earned? What buckler has he but your breast? Draw your hand from him for an hour, a day, and he falls beneath the daggers of the Douglas. Oh, I know what I speak of.

MARY (*stubbornly*). He is my husband.

BOTHWELL (*savagely*). Ay; that is his death-warrant. If need be, I will strangle him with mine own hands rather than see your bright life wrecked for him.

MARY. Why?

BOTHWELL. Because I love you.

MARY. Ah, no, no. You shall not soil your honour for me, my lord. It is better to part for ever. I will take the veil; I will go into a cloister where no man may see my face. You shall not do murder for me, my lord.

BOTHWELL. 'Tis not murder but justice. Can you not hold apart? We ask no more. Stand you aside. Let him no longer hide behind your skirts even while he betrays you.

MARY. No, no, it cannot be.

BOTHWELL. Listen. If he is once in Edinburgh, and it is known that you do not protect him, there is no hope for him. The Douglas does not forgive. Nor for that matter do I.

MARY. What grudge have you against him?

BOTHWELL (*callously*). He stands in my way. You know how he stands in my way. Is this fool, this traitor—for he is a traitor, and your father would have had his head long since—to separate us for ever, my Queen?

MARY. Oh, my lord, do not tempt me.

BOTHWELL. There will be no scandal. No rumour even. Get him to Edinburgh. Then leave the rest to Morton.

MARY. He would not come to Edinburgh. He is afraid.

BOTHWELL. Where is he now?

MARY. In Glasgow. In his father's hold.

BOTHWELL. That shall be your part, my Queen. Draw him from his stronghold. Bring him within reach of the daggers of the Douglases.

MARY. I cannot order his return.

BOTHWELL. No. He would not come. It must be by kindness or you will not move him. See, for this once, I will absolve you from your promise. You must go to him. You must entreat him kindly. Let him think your quarrels over and you his loving wife again if he will but come to Edinburgh.

MARY. No; I cannot betray him, my lord.

BOTHWELL. He betrayed you.

MARY. Oh no, no, my lord, I cannot. In all my life I have never deceived. I am not Judas to betray with a kiss.

BOTHWELL. I said naught of kissing. You shall not kiss him. Never again shall you kiss him or any man save me. Come here. Close to me—close.

(*He draws her close to him.*)

MARY. Oh, do not tempt me.

BOTHWELL. Never again shall you kiss any but me. Promise.

MARY. You know, my lord. Dear God, you know too well.

BOTHWELL. Promise.

MARY. I promise.

(*They kiss.* BOTHWELL *catches her hand and, in spite of her resistance, makes her drive the pin which he places in it right through the little image which she is holding.*)

BOTHWELL. Now give me your hand.

MARY. What do you want me to do ? Ah, no, no, my lord. Not that. No, no.

BOTHWELL. Nothing but this man's life stands between us, Mary. It is him or me. Choose.

MARY. I have chosen, my lord, and you know it.

BOTHWELL. I must have a sign.

MARY. Ah, no, no.

BOTHWELL. There. 'Tis right through his heart. The heart that betrayed you, that brought the murderers at midnight to your door.

MARY. Oh, what have you done ? You have made me a murderess.

(*She bursts into tears, burying her face in his bosom.*)

BOTHWELL. I have claimed you, body and soul. In heaven or hell you are mine—mine only.

MARY. Oh, my dear, my dear, God will not pardon us.

(*The curtain falls.*)

END OF SCENE I

SCENE 2

The scene is DARNLEY'S *lodging at Glasgow, a plainly furnished room on the second storey of a house overlooking the High Street. At the back are two windows over the street. There are doors right and left. In the left corner beside the window is a couch strewn with cushions and tapestry. Against the right wall is a small writing-desk with papers and writing things on it. Near the couch is an easy-chair.*

As the curtain rises, MARY *is discovered seated at the writing-table. She is in a riding habit and skirt, and wears a hat with a long-plumed feather. It is plain that she is just arrived, and her skirt is dusty. Long gloves, gauntlets of soft leather, lie on the table. She writes hurriedly for a second. Then, taking up her letter, looks it over; then with a quick glance round kisses the paper and closes it, sealing it. Then she touches a small bell on the table.* PARIS *enters right.*

MARY. There is the letter. You will take it to my lord. But you will not start yet. You will wait until I have seen the King. He is to see me now as soon as I have put the dust of the journey from me. You understand? You will wait till then?

PARIS. I understand, Madam.

MARY. Paris—how—how fares your master?

PARIS. Well, so far as I know, Madam.

MARY. Does he speak of me—does he think of me?

PARIS (*confused*). Madam, it would not be easy to say what his lordship may be thinking of from time to time.

MARY (*sighing*). His letters tell so little.

PARIS. Ay, Madam, that shows his wisdom. Letters are ticklish things. The less said in them that others can understand the better.

MARY. You have never been in love, Paris?

PARIS. Oh, sometimes, Madam. Off and on.

MARY. You are like all men. You do not understand the hunger that would know all the loved one does, that would not leave a moment of his day unknown, unaccounted for.

PARIS. When I love, Madam, I am more anxiously concerned regarding the nights. Your night is a far more dangerous period for lovers.

MARY. You shall not make me jealous. (*After a pause*) What does my lord do at night, Paris ?

PARIS. Mostly he drinks, Madam. Till it is time to go to bed.

MARY. Oh, you are stupid—but faithful. Listen, Paris. You will tell my lord that I have thought over what he said to me and that I cannot do it. It is not in my nature. You will tell him that. That I love him only, but that I cannot do it.

PARIS (*scratching his chin meditatively*). Women always say that. But we men never believe them, Madam.

MARY. Your master will believe me. You will tell him what I have said. It is all in the letter, but you will tell him.

PARIS. Yes, Madam.

MARY. Do not forget. It is important. You will tell him I am resolved not to.

PARIS. Yes, Madam.

MARY. Now go and wait. I will send word to you.

(*Rising, she picks up her gloves and goes out, right.* PARIS *holds the door for her. When she has gone he looks at the letter which she has given him and shrugs his shoulders. Then he, too, goes out, right. The stage is left empty for a moment. Presently* TAYLOR, *one of his English squires, enters with* DARNLEY *supported on his arm. He helps him across to the couch by the window, and* DARNLEY *reclines on it wearily, and breathing with the effort of movement. He is plainly ill,*

and is in fact convalescent after smallpox. He has changed considerably. His old fresh look is gone. His manner is petulant and suspicious, his face thin and pointed. There is a strange nervousness in his manner. Above all, he is afraid—afraid and yet dangerous like a trapped weasel.)

DARNLEY. Is she here?

TAYLOR. She has just alighted, sire, and is removing the dust of travel. You will see her?

DARNLEY. I must see her, must I not? Is she not the Queen? Can she not order that?

TAYLOR. In so far as she is the Queen, she may order, sire. In so far as she is your wife, she must obey.

DARNLEY (*with a short laugh*). I do not think Mary looks at it in that way.

TAYLOR. My lord, she will. I have spoken with her. I find her all consideration for her husband. She has even brought a litter for you. That shows her thoughtfulness.

DARNLEY (*suspiciously*). A litter? Why?

TAYLOR. Why, for your journey to Edinburgh.

DARNLEY. To Edinburgh! I will not go to Edinburgh. This is some plot, some treason. I will not go.

TAYLOR. At any rate, the thought was kind.

DARNLEY. Kind? She means to murder me—as Rizzio was murdered. Why should she bring a litter? I told her that I would stay here, that my illness forbade my moving save in a litter.

TAYLOR. Therefore has she brought one.

DARNLEY. You fool! 'Twas my excuse to stay.

TAYLOR. Nay, this is the fevered imagination of sickness, your Majesty. 'Tis natural that she should wish to provide for your journey when you are well enough to travel.

DARNLEY. Are you, too, in league with her and the Douglases? Is all Scotland a nest of traitors?

TAYLOR. If you think that, sire, I will leave you.

DARNLEY (*clutching him*). No, no, forgive me, Taylor. I know you faithful. But I will not leave this town. Here I am safe and Edinburgh is full of ghosts, the Frenchman, Rizzio, spouting blood from twenty wounds, those poor devils who trusted me and whom I could not save. Pah, the place reeks of blood!

TAYLOR. Shall a King fear blood?

DARNLEY. Ay, if he has spilled it. Night after night Rizzio comes to me, showing his spurting wounds, great gashes that show like red mouths in the dark. Oh, I am afraid, afraid. Fear is my bedfellow.

TAYLOR. Kings should not be afraid.

DARNLEY. I must stay here. Mark that, Taylor. Nothing shall move me.

TAYLOR (DARNLEY *is hysterical with the weakness that comes after long sickness.* TAYLOR *is endeavouring to brace his nerves by appearing perfectly calm and stolid*). If it is your Majesty's wish, I see no reason why anyone should question it.

DARNLEY. You do not know the Queen. Did she say anything?

TAYLOR. Only that she wished you nearer her.

DARNLEY. Nearer her? What did she mean by that?

TAYLOR. It is natural for a wife to wish that.

DARNLEY. I do not know. I only know that it is natural that she should hate me. You will not leave me, Taylor. Swear that you will not leave me. You will not let her force me from this town.

TAYLOR. None can do that, sire, if you do not wish it yourself. But for God's sake do not show your fear to the Queen.

DARNLEY. Swear, man, swear. I will not see her else.

TAYLOR (*shrugging his shoulders*). Very well, sire. I swear,

DARNLEY. Ah, I feel safer now.

(*He lies back exhausted. There is a knock at the door, right.* TAYLOR *goes across to it, and* MARY *enters. She has removed her hat and has changed her riding-skirt.*)

MARY (*whispering*). How is he, sir ?

TAYLOR. The fever has left him, Madam, but naturally he is tired and a little peevish. Your Majesty must look for changes in him.

MARY. Would to God I could, sir. Is he asleep ?

TAYLOR. No.

DARNLEY. Is that the Queen ?

MARY (*coming forward*). Yes. It is I, Henry. You may leave us, sir.

DARNLEY. No, no, he is not to go.

MARY (*imperiously*). Leave us.

DARNLEY. I say he shall not go. I will not be alone with you.

MARY. What is this ?

TAYLOR. Madam, it is a sick man's whim—his fancy.

MARY (*decisively*). Henry, either he goes or I do. Surely we are not yet so estranged that we cannot speak in private. (*She goes over to the window, leaving the men to settle it.*)

DARNLEY (*whispering*). Taylor, go, but stay within call—within call. You will not fail me ?

(TAYLOR *bows and goes out, left.* MARY *turns.*)

MARY. Why are you afraid of me, Henry ?

DARNLEY. I—I am not afraid.

MARY. You act as if you were. Why did you wish that man to stay ?

DARNLEY. He should be there to wait on me if I need anything, a drink of water, a napkin. You forget I have been ill.

MARY. I can do that for you.

DARNLEY. You ?

MARY. Yes. Am I not your wife ?

DARNLEY. Ah, if that could only be again. If you could forget. Mary, as God is in heaven, I did not mean to shame you last year when they drove me to—to kill that man.

MARY. Poor Davy.

DARNLEY. They told me he—he was your lover.

MARY (*indignantly*). Now by the splendour of God——

DARNLEY (*interrupting*). No, no, Mary, I did not believe them. I knew it was a lie. But I was jealous of him. He was always with you. He did everything for you. Always you turned to him, and I was jealous. You seemed to be slipping away from me. I was of no account, and they mocked at me for it, and this foreigner——

MARY. Davy is in his grave, my lord.

DARNLEY. Ah, you are hard as iron. You will never forgive. You can excuse me for being jealous. Surely a woman can pardon that.

MARY. Would I be here if I did not ?

DARNLEY. Then you have forgiven me? It is no easy thing for a man to ask his wife's forgiveness, Mary.

MARY. I did not say that. Why do you seek to leave for England, my lord ?

DARNLEY. Who told you that ?

MARY (*contemptuously*). All Scotland knows that you seek to escape from your wife. Do you fear me so much ?

DARNLEY (*sullenly*). You have driven me to it. What is there for me here ? You have made me a mockery to the whole people. Even at our son's christening you made me stand outside. All men were present but myself. All men were honoured save the child's father.

MARY. Were you not also to blame, Henry ?

DARNLEY. Perhaps. Yet if you had loved me only a little, I think you would have forgotten that.

MARY. I loved you once.

DARNLEY. Mary, could you not love me again ? Could we not forget these differences ? Could we not live once more as husband and wife, as Queen and King, joined and not separate ?

MARY. Can the past return ?

DARNLEY (*eagerly*). Forget the past. Think of the future only. How fair a future there might be before us. Elizabeth cannot live for ever. My father has reports of her health. Always she is ill, always complaining. Your son—think what it might mean to him. A double throne, a twin sceptre, and you and I to wield it in trust for him.

MARY. How can I trust you ?

DARNLEY. Mary, I was mad last year—mad with the offended pride and folly of a boy.

MARY (*considering*). One thing we might do. It is to propose that I have come.

DARNLEY. What ?

MARY. We can at least pretend—for the child's sake. I can be your wife and you my husband, but in public only.

DARNLEY (*cunningly*). You have need of me, then ?

MARY. Yes; for my son. A woman cannot stand alone in this country.

DARNLEY. Then I will make terms with you.

MARY. Terms ? What terms ?

DARNLEY. I must have my honours, my titles, my dignities.

MARY. Of course.

DARNLEY (*catching at her arm*). Ay, but I must have more. I must have you, Mary. Not as a partner only but as a wife.

MARY. No. Never that.

DARNLEY (*pleading*). Mary!

MARY. No. I could not bear it. Do not ask me that. I have sworn an oath in heaven that I will not.

DARNLEY (*cunning*). Then I, too, will not.

MARY. What do you mean?

DARNLEY. I am for England. The ship is waiting for me. I will say that you drove me out, that my life was not safe.

MARY (*scornful*). No one will believe you, my lord.

DARNLEY. Oh, they will believe me if I give them a reason.

MARY. What reason can you give?

DARNLEY. That I have found a secret—a secret so dangerous that I dare not stay.

MARY. What secret?

DARNLEY. That this child that shall inherit the double crown and twofold sceptre is not mine (*catching her wrist*)—not mine, Mary—but Davy's—Davy's. What would Elizabeth say to that?

MARY (*wrenching her hand free*). God! You would say that?

DARNLEY. Ay. Oh, I am not the poor humble slave you think me. I will teach you to know me yet.

MARY. This is the delirium of fever.

DARNLEY. Oh no. I am not afraid of you here. Were I in Edinburgh, now, you would have my throat cut if I said as much, eh? Wouldn't you? But I am safe enough here, with Taylor just outside the door. Eh?

(*He is altogether hateful.* MARY *goes over to the window.*)

MARY. You are mad. How think you I shall love you if you speak like this?

DARNLEY. Because you must. Love and hate are near enough with many married folks for the one to enjoy

the other. It is your hate that wakes my love and my love that would feed my—hate.

(*There is a pause.* MARY *looks out of the window, then turns. She has resolved on the murder, and, from this point on, has no thought but to deceive him, to get him in her power.*)

MARY. Do you really mean this ?

DARNLEY. Ay, by the mother of God. If you do not admit me to your arms, if you do not acknowledge me your husband, with all the rights and privileges—all the privileges of a husband over your goods and your kingdom and your—body, I will spread that tale to all the world. All Christendom shall hear it.

MARY (*coldly*). Very well. I consent.

DARNLEY. You promise ? I have never known you break a promise.

MARY. I promise. But on one condition.

DARNLEY. What is the condition ?

MARY. That you come back to Edinburgh with me.

DARNLEY (*afraid*). No. I will not do that.

MARY (*with an effort she makes herself captivating, loving even*). Ah, Henry, please. To please me.

(*Kneeling by his couch.*)

DARNLEY. Why do you ask that ?

MARY. I will do what you wish. I will do anything you wish, but I must have you near me. I must nurse you back to health—to health and—love.

DARNLEY. Love ? Do you mean that ?

MARY. Oh, my dear, a woman cannot live alone. She must have a master. We are all made that way. How can we recover what we once had, the frank companionship, the ready smile, the frequent kiss, if you stay here and sulk suspicious, and I rule in Edinburgh ?

DARNLEY. Will you kiss me again, Mary ?

MARY (*playfully*). Not in Glasgow, my lord.

DARNLEY. Not now—as a sign that you forgive me ?

MARY. Ah, but I have not forgiven you yet. No, no, my lord. Wait—wait till we are in Edinburgh, where we first loved.

DARNLEY (*now all on fire*). What a silly reason to wait.

MARY (*rising*). It is a woman's reason. Besides, you are not well yet, my lord.

DARNLEY. But we are friends again ?

MARY. If you will come with me. Listen ! I have brought a litter for you and bearers specially trained for sickness. They will carry you as on a bed of down. A King, my King, cannot stay in a common lodging-house like this. He must be housed in a palace.

DARNLEY. You have the palace ready for me ?

MARY. Not Holyrood. Another house—outside the walls —where we can love with none to spy on us.

DARNLEY. What is it called ?

MARY (*shivering slightly*). The Kirk o' Field.

DARNLEY. 'Tis a good omen. But we shall alter that. We shall call it Honeymoon House. Shall we not, sweet ?

MARY. Honeymoon House. (*She is almost overcome by the horror of her own treachery.*)

DARNLEY. Mary, I fear the lords. Morton is back again.

MARY. Can he dare anything if I am on your side ?

DARNLEY. No, that is true. I have you—you and Bothwell. He is a stout man, Bothwell.

MARY. We leave to-morrow, then.

DARNLEY. Ay. To-morrow. I must give orders to my household.

MARY. I will call Taylor.

DARNLEY. Mary (*holding out his hand*).

MARY. No. Not now, my lord. Do not be so impatient. We must wait.

DARNLEY (*with a laugh*). For Honeymoon House ?

MARY. Yes. You make me blush, my lord.

(*Going to the door, left,* MARY *summons* TAYLOR, *who is outside. He comes in.*)

MARY. Your master is tired. He would rest.

(TAYLOR *helps* DARNLEY *out as he has helped him in. They go out, left.*)

DARNLEY. I shall see you in the morning ?

MARY. Am I not to ride beside your litter ?

DARNLEY. Yes, yes. Good-night, Mary.

MARY. Good-night, my lord.

(*As the pair disappear, left, closing the door behind them,* MARY *goes over to the writing-table and rings a bell. A* PAGE *enters, right.*)

MARY. That man who went just now—to whom I gave a letter. Send for him. Quick ! He must not go.

(*The* PAGE *goes out.* MARY *begins to write hurriedly, feverishly.* PARIS *enters, right.*)

PARIS. Madam.

MARY. Give me the letter I gave you. I have changed my mind and will send another. But you must give my message by word of mouth. You will tell my lord what I first said to you. You remember ?

PARIS. It is my business to remember.

MARY. You will, then, say that I have changed my mind. That between the telling of that and this second message the man has sealed his own death-warrant. That in all things I find him a traitor, open and confessed, and that our first purpose stands. That tomorrow I will bring the man to the house he knows of. That is all. You will remember ?

PARIS. Yes.

MARY. Repeat it, then.

PARIS. The man has sealed his death-warrant and your purpose holds. You will bring the man to the house prepared for him.

MARY. Yes—to-morrow. Now go, and be quick and secret.

(PARIS *turns to the door.*)

Paris, you will tell my lord that I would not let him kiss me. You will tell him that ?

(PARIS *bows, and goes out, right.* MARY *continues writing furiously. The curtain falls.*)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

The scene is the antechamber to the King's sleeping-apartments in Kirk o' Field. At the back, in the right corner, is an arch leading to an inner room where his bed can be seen. Farther to the left at the back, under low arches, can be seen the deep blue of the winter night and the spires and castle of the city of Edinburgh through the glass of the windows. In the right wall is a door which is at present closed. In the left wall a small doorway gives on to a winding stair, leading to the vaults below. The room is plainly, barely furnished. It is lit by candles in brackets on the walls. There are several of these, but at present only one is lit and the room is dark. As the curtain rises, PARIS *is discovered watching the door to the right. A snatch of a drinking-song comes faintly from behind this door, and a burst of men's laughter.* PARIS *shrugs his shoulders. The door left opens, and* HAY, *a burly, swarthy man of thirty or so, appears at it. His hands and face are black with the powder which he has been carrying to the vaults. He*

is followed by HEPBURN, *who is also grimed with powder. Both are common working-men and not in the plot. Holding up his hand for silence,* PARIS *comes over to them.*

PARIS. Well, have you finished ?

HAY. Not yet. There is the one load still to come. Must we wait for it ? It's gey late and awfy cold, mun.

PARIS. You must store it before you go.

HEPBURN. Why are we storin' all this powder here at any rate ? That's what I want to know.

PARIS. Why does a miller wear a white hat, *mon ami* ?

HEPBURN. Does he, now ? An never noticed that. Why ?

PARIS. To keep his head warm.

HEPBURN. I suppose that would be the way o' it. But where does the powder come in ?

PARIS. Out of the wet, monsieur inquisitive.

HEPBURN. It's no' over-dry down there.

PARIS. Get on, man, get on with it. Ye must make an end or my lord will be fine and angry. He'll be coming out in a minute to see if ye've finished. (*Points to door, right, from behind which comes a fresh burst of laughter.*)

HEPBURN. That'll be one o' Bob Stuart's tales. A smutty one. He aye makes them laugh.

HAY. It seems mighty queer to be storing powder in a palace.

HEPBURN. Ay, and the Queen's afeared o' it herself.

PARIS. How know you that ?

HEPBURN. She's taken away all the fine things she brought from Holyrood—a bed wi' a purple cover and tapestries and hangings and sic-like gewgaws a woman's fond of. It would seem she doesna think the house over-safe.

HAY (*with a short laugh*). I ken fine why she took the bed. That was no' the reason.

HEPBURN. Why did she take it, then ?

HAY. It would ha' held two, and she'd sooner sleep alone

than wi' her husband. I don't blame her. He's aye drunk. Listen to him.

(*There is a fresh sound of laughter from the adjoining room.*)

PARIS. Hush, for God's sake, sirs. Such talk is dangerous. Get you to your work and let me know when it is finished. Hurry with it.

(*They go out, left, and down the stairs grumbling.* PARIS *closes the door behind them.*)

HEPBURN. I'll be gey pleased to finish wi' it. It's most almighty cold.

(MARY *enters from the inner room.*)

MARY. Has your master come yet ?

PARIS. He is with the King, Madam.

MARY. They are drinking still ?

PARIS. It sounds like it.

MARY. Have they finished—the others ? Down below there ?

PARIS. They have yet one more load, Madam.

MARY. Tell them to work more quietly. You would think they were a hundred men, not two. The house is full of their footsteps.

(*She goes over to the window and looks out over the sleeping city.* PARIS, *after a moment's hesitation, comes up behind her and speaks.*)

PARIS. Madam!

MARY. What is it now ? Look, Paris, how still it is. The very houses seem asleep. I was wondering how they would look when in an hour or so the lights flash out in all the windows and the bells are set ringing, and the whole ravening monster wakes to greet the deed we do. It is quiet enough now, but I

know how cruel and fierce and dangerous the heart of it is. Do you ever foresee into the future, Paris ?

PARIS. Nay, the present has always trouble enough for me.

MARY. It is a dreadful gift. Sometimes I think I have it, and shudder.

PARIS. Madam, I am uneasy.

MARY. Uneasy ? Why ?

PARIS. This that we do. The King suspects. I am nearly certain that he suspects.

MARY. Let him suspect. I would not kill his soul alive. If he thinks himself in danger, he will think on God, perhaps, and be prepared. It is better so.

PARIS. I do not like it, Madam. It is a great enterprise, and may give much trouble to those who further it. It is all very well for my master and great lords like him. Whatever happens he will go free, but for common men—that is another matter. I have seen men broken on the wheel for such matters and torn in pieces by wild horses. Their shrieks made one's blood run cold. I can still hear them.

MARY. What does it matter how one dies ? It is the living that imagination boggles at. Have you ever thought, Paris, what life may mean to a woman married to a man whose touch she cannot bear ?

PARIS. Such women do not come my way.

MARY. Your victims torn by wild horses, broken by mallets, do you think they suffer such torture ? And it lasts a lifetime. Oh, the women do not shriek. But they know. God's truth they know, and pay for the knowledge.

PARIS. Madam, I am afraid of this matter.

MARY. You are safe enough. Have you not the bond signed by the lords ?

PARIS. There is one signature wanting. Your brother's.

MARY. He has gone to St. Andrews. His aunt is sick.

PARIS. It is a curious thing about that lord, that when anything of danger has to be done he has always

a sick aunt or cousin, or some such reason for absence.

MARY. You have my word, and I have put fear from me. Now do I know how the executioner feels when his victim kneels at the block and he heaves up his thirsty axe for the stroke. I have no pity in me, no shrinking, only the stern resolve of justice.

PARIS. Nay, if this is justice, Madam, I say no more. I am too wise a man to meddle with law. But that is a man's feeling, Madam, not a woman's.

MARY. I do not think I am a woman to-night, Paris.

(*The door, right, opens and* BOTHWELL *enters. He does not at first see* MARY, *who is in the shadow of the window. He closes the door cautiously behind him.*)

BOTHWELL. Paris!

PARIS. My lord!

BOTHWELL. You fool, what have you done? Could you not work more quietly? Already he suspects. He will not come.

MARY. What does he suspect, my lord?

BOTHWELL. Murder.

MARY. Murder! God, and he is right! Send that man away. He—he frightens me.

BOTHWELL (*to* PARIS). Go, fool. See that done which has to be done. Then come and tell me.

(PARIS *goes out, left.*)

Why do you look so strangely, Mary?

MARY (*with a sudden revulsion of feeling as she realises with the spoken word what it is that she is doing*). Murder! Oh, why did you say the word? Why did you tell him? I thought it—it was to be an accident. That no one should know—not even God. Even in confession I would have hidden it locked deep within my heart.

BOTHWELL. God may be able to contrive an accident without means. I know nothing about that. All that I know is that I cannot. He had to know. The powder must be brought here. It must be fired. They all know.

MARY. Oh, do not speak of it. I am afraid—terribly afraid.

BOTHWELL. Faith, so am I. But I am the cooler on that account. And so must you be. A false step, a sign of fear, and you spoil all, and this great plan of ours comes to naught.

MARY. I cannot go on with it, my lord. I dare not.

BOTHWELL. Why, what has made you fearful now?

MARY. God, I think. He has set pity in my heart.

BOTHWELL. Pity? For him? When was he merciful?

MARY. He is so humble. He clings to me as if I were his only safety, and all the time I know the murderers are hidden in the shadows waiting—waiting for me to go. Oh, I cannot do it—I cannot do it. You should not have said it.

BOTHWELL (*excitedly*). This is madness. We cannot draw back now. It is too late.

MARY. No, no; that is ever the Devil's argument.

BOTHWELL. You do not love me, then?

MARY (*wildly*). I do not love you? I who have sold my soul for you. Who have given my crown, my people, my honour, even my child for you. Oh, what spell have you cast over me that life means to me only the touch of your hand and the sound of your voice?

BOTHWELL. Yet you would doom me now?

MARY. What do you mean?

BOTHWELL. Look you, this thing cannot be hid. If he escapes now, he and the lords will surely set the hunt on me in his stead, and, like a pack of wolves, pull me down like Rizzio, clinging to your skirts.

MARY. No, no, Not that.

BOTHWELL. It is his life or mine. I dare not let him go now.

MARY. Oh, would you make me a murderess? Would you have me go down quick to hell?

BOTHWELL. Is there no hell in this life? Do you think I have no knowledge of hell who daily see him stretch out his hand to touch you, who daily see that hope dawn in his eyes? What did he call this house—Honeymoon House? Ay, and laughed when he said it. Shall I hear that laugh and let him live? Shall I see some day that dawning hope in his eyes reflected in yours?

MARY. But not this way, my lord. See, let us fly. Take me away from this horrible country. Take me to France, to Italy, where the sun still shines and the people laugh and believe in a God that is merciful. But not this, not this.

BOTHWELL. You love him still?

MARY. No, no.

BOTHWELL. Ay, you do. Look me in the face.

MARY. Ah, do not touch me. You know the power your hands have upon me. Oh, it is not fair.

BOTHWELL. You shall. Mary, it is him or me, his life or mine. I swear it to you by the Mother of God. If he lives I must die, and horribly. They will rack these limbs you have loved till the blood spurts from them. They will crush my nerves and sinews as they crushed Black Hob's there in the dungeon. They will set me spinning on a gibbet for you to look at. God, do I not know them?

MARY. Oh, my lord, let it be soon. I cannot endure it longer. I cannot bear it. I have never deceived anyone in my life. I cannot bear that I should draw him thus slowly, slowly to his death.

BOTHWELL. 'Tis for to-night. You knew that?

MARY. To-night? I had forgotten. Oh, I must steel my heart. (*Fearfully*) How—how will you do it? Ah, do not tell me. I should dream of it.

BOTHWELL. That is my business. Come, the time is short.

MARY. You will not fail me, Bothwell? You will never fail me? Even when I am old and shrivelled?

BOTHWELL (*he has recovered his spirits*). You will never be old and shrivelled, *ma mie.*

MARY. She prophesied it, that girl. What was it she said? In the hour of your deepest need, when heaven and hell are themselves on the edge of a hair, he whom you love and he whom you bear shall fail you miserably. Oh, dear God, dear God, if that should come to pass then indeed am I punished, then indeed do I go down quick to hell with none to comfort me.

BOTHWELL. Hell? I fear not hell. No, nor the Devil himself. Come.

MARY. Wait.

BOTHWELL. What is it?

MARY. The rug. There on the bed. I must save it. It was your gift to me, my lord.

BOTHWELL (*as she goes and picks up the fur rug on the couch*). What a thing to think of at such a time. Shall I ever understand a woman's mind? Come. I hear them stirring.

(*They go out, left. The stage is left empty for a second, then* DARNLEY *enters, right, accompanied by* TAYLOR. *He is leaning on* TAYLOR'S *arm.*)

DARNLEY. Where is Lord Bothwell?

TAYLOR. He has gone to meet the Queen, your Majesty. She comes to bid you good-night.

DARNLEY. Let me have more light. I do not like these shadows.

(TAYLOR *signs to an* ATTENDANT *who is behind them. The man lights all the candles or torches on the walls.* DARNLEY *points to the door, left.*)

That door. Where does it lead to?

ATTENDANT. To the vaults, my lord.

DARNLEY. Can you bolt it from inside ?
TAYLOR (*trying it*). It is locked, my lord.
DARNLEY (*to* ATTENDANT). Go you and bring the key.

(*The man goes out.* DARNLEY *goes across and looks out of the window, then turns to* TAYLOR, *who is busy arranging the bed.*)

I do not like this house. It has a ghostly air. Do you think it might be haunted, Taylor ?
TAYLOR. Haunted ? No, my lord.
DARNLEY. There is a cold smell of dissolution about it as if it were already a tomb and the worms busy inside. It is insubstantial, like a ghost. Here one moment and gone the next. I had a strange fancy just now that I could see the night sky and the stars through the walls as through a mist.
TAYLOR. The walls are solid enough, sire.
DARNLEY. I do not like it. To-morrow I will move. See to it.
TAYLOR. Shall I ask permission of the Queen ?
DARNLEY. The Queen ? Cannot I move without permission of my wife ? See to it. And move my bed in here. Into the light. I do not love the shadows.

(TAYLOR *moves the couch into the inner room. A noise is heard as of a heavy weight being dropped. It comes from below.* DARNLEY *starts.*)

What is that ? That noise ?
TAYLOR. Nothing. Someone outside, I think.

(DARNLEY *sits down on the bed. He removes his doublet. The* ATTENDANT *enters, right, with the key for which he has asked.*)

ATTENDANT. Sire, the Queen waits outside.
DARNLEY. Let her wait. Is that the key ?

(*The* ATTENDANT *offers it.*)

See that the door is locked, Taylor. I do not like these secret entrances to a King's chamber.

(TAYLOR *tries the key in the door, locking it from the inside.*)

TAYLOR. It is fast, your Majesty.

DARNLEY (*to the* ATTENDANT). Tell the Queen that we await her pleasure. Go!

(*The man goes out.* DARNLEY *turns to* TAYLOR.)

Let us think of something humble for her, Taylor. The Book. Ay, that will annoy her, being Catholic. Read me a Psalm, Taylor. We must be humble—humble and pious.

(*There is a knock at the door, right.*)

That will be her, eh? Sit down and read, man. Loud, so that she may hear it. Come in, come in.

(*The door, right, opens and* MARY *enters.*)

TAYLOR (*opening the book at random*). "Out of the depths, O Lord, out of the depths."

DARNLEY. Is that you, Mary? Come in. Come in. We are, as you see, at our devotions.

MARY. I will not disturb them, sir.

DARNLEY. Nay, you must bid me good-night. I can finish the Psalm later. Come and sit by me.

MARY. I cannot stay, my lord. I must get back to Holyrood. There is work for to-night.

DARNLEY. Work? What work?

MARY. Sebastian's wedding.

DARNLEY. To a man weddings are mournful. Always they make me think of funerals. But they set a woman's heart aflame. You can stay long enough for a kiss, Mary.

(TAYLOR *goes out, right, leaving them alone.*)

MARY (*shuddering in spite of herself*). No, no.

DARNLEY (*excitedly*). Think of the wedding. Think of Sebastian's girl in his arms. Come. The room is safe enough. We have locked the doors. It is as snug as a bird's nest.

MARY. No; not to-night.

DARNLEY. When then?

MARY. To-morrow. I have promised.

DARNLEY. You shall kiss me, and now. I will not longer be put off from my lawful pleasures.

(*Struggling with her.*)

MARY. Ah, you are mad. Let me go. Let me go.

DARNLEY. Yes, you hate me, don't you? I like you better when you hate. 'Tis pleasanter so. It has a sweeter savour a kiss when the lips loath it. Come, you shall kiss me or I will tell all Edinburgh about Davy's son that is to be King of Scotland. I will cry it to the street from the windows.

MARY. You know that is false.

DARNLEY. Very likely, my dear, but they don't. Oh, I have been too cunning for you. You thought you had me here helpless. You thought you could shut my mouth when you pleased. But it is all written out in a safe place where you cannot come by it.

MARY. No one will believe it.

DARNLEY. Oh yes, they will. There are many who will wish to believe it, and for such a tale it is easy to gain credence. I have been too clever for you, Mary. I am not so helpless as you thought. Come. Admit it, and give me my kiss. I will be satisfied with that for to-night. But to-morrow—to-morrow I will feel your body stiffen with hate. I will dream of it to-night.

MARY. If—if we are to be friends, my lord, why should you have written down this slander?

DARNLEY. I do not wish to be friends. Come, give me my kiss and let me feed my hate on love.

MARY. I think you are really mad. Do you not remember what I swore?

DARNLEY. You have sworn many things. For one, you swore to love, honour, and obey me. Before God you swore it.

MARY. You know best who made that difficult. Do you not remember our last kiss? Last year. Before—before they burst in on Davy. O God!

DARNLEY. Pah, can a woman never forget?

MARY. Why are you so altered? But now you were all humility.

DARNLEY. I am tired of humility. It does not pay with women. I have no mind to see Bothwell take Davy's place. He would be more difficult.

MARY. Bothwell?

DARNLEY. Ay; do you think I am blind?

MARY. He is my faithful servant—and yours, my lord.

DARNLEY. So was Davy. See that he does not become anything more or he will follow the other. Eh? That frightens you. Come, give me my kiss. I must have earnest for to-morrow.

MARY. Have you forgotten what I said a year ago? Beware of my kisses, my lord, for if I kiss, like you I kill.

(*She has made up her mind that if he kisses her she will leave him to his fate. He rushes on it.*)

DARNLEY. Ah, but you can't kill me. That's where I have you. Come.

(*He kisses her. She makes no effort to prevent it.*)

How cold your lips are. They were not used to be so cold.

MARY (*covering her face with her hands*). Oh, may God forgive me.

DARNLEY. What do you mean? Why do you look so strangely?

(*The slow, heavy strokes of some great distant bell sound through the room.* DARNLEY *starts.*)

DARNLEY. What is that?

MARY. It is the passing bell for some poor soul. May God have mercy on him.

DARNLEY (*furiously*). A damned cheerful lodging this you have picked out for me. It looks on to a graveyard. It is surrounded by tombs. To-morrow I move from it.

MARY. To-morrow. Yes.

(*The door, right, opens.* BOTHWELL *appears at it.*)

BOTHWELL. Madam, the torches are ready. We await your Majesty.

DARNLEY. You're for the wedding, eh, my lord?

BOTHWELL. They have a masque, sire, and dancing.

DARNLEY. They are always dancing at Holyrood. They would dance on a man's grave. Nay, what have I said to startle you now, sir? Never mind. To-day to thee, to-morrow to me, as the proverb has it.

BOTHWELL. Your Majesty will dance to-morrow?

DARNLEY. No. But I have a wedding to attend. Have I not, Mary? Good-night. Good-night. Until to-morrow. Good-night, my lord.

(MARY *goes out, right. She does not speak. She moves as if in a trance. At the door she hesitates for a second.*)

BOTHWELL. Madam, it is already late. Almost too late.

(MARY *goes out.*)

Good-night, sire. Pleasant dreams.

(*He also goes out. The door closes behind them.* DARNLEY *remains sitting on the bed. Presently* TAYLOR *enters, right.*)

DARNLEY. Have they gone?

TAYLOR. Yes.

DARNLEY. What was it she said? "My lord, beware my kisses, for if I kiss I kill." She thinks to frighten me, Taylor. He, he, he! (*Chuckling.*) I suppose Chastelard kissed, and Davy paid for it. But not I, Taylor. 'Tis no easy matter to kill a King. (*Starting.*) What is that noise?

TAYLOR. I heard nothing, my lord.

DARNLEY (*moodily*). I do not like this house. It is dark. Too dark. Get me more lights.

(*He looks round shuddering. He is really in deadly fear, but dare not show it.*)

TAYLOR. Here is no room for them, sire.

DARNLEY. It has too many noises. It talks. Houses should be silent—as the grave. God, 'tis an omen! What made me think of that? What put that word into my mouth?

TAYLOR (*trying to distract him*). How can a house talk? What does it talk of, sire?

DARNLEY. Of murder—the murder of Princes. I think she means to kill me—horribly.

TAYLOR. That is impossible, sire.

DARNLEY. She would do it if she could. But she will not. No, you are right there. I am too clever for her. I have a guard against her. And a revenge. I can force her to yield, to bend that stubborn will.

TAYLOR. It is never wise to force a woman to do what she does not wish to do.

DARNLEY. Are you so wise already, being so young? The best of it is, she hates me, Taylor. (*Chuckling horribly.*) She hates me as if I were very poison. Yet shall she drink the poison, loathing it. There's a revenge for you. To know yourself loathed by a woman and yet bring her crawling to your feet. To see the hate in her eyes even as she kisses you, knowing that her kisses are promised to another. To bring

her back to board and bed when the very sight of you makes her shudder, and you can feel her body quiver with hate as you lay hand on her. There's a revenge. Oh, I was humble enough when it suited me. She thinks me a dog to fawn about her feet. You wait.

TAYLOR. Sire, you imagine these things.

DARNLEY. I know what I know. Get me some wine.

TAYLOR. The doctors forbid it.

DARNLEY (*in one of his insane outbursts of passion, threatening to stab him with the dagger which he carries at his girdle*). The Devil take all doctors! Do as I bid you, or by God . . . Ah, you fear the knife like Mary, eh? She fears it too, and, by God, she's right. This cut Davy's throat for him. It may slice hers one of these days.

TAYLOR. Sire, you talk wildly.

DARNLEY (*sitting down heavily on the bed*). Get you the wine.

(TAYLOR *goes out, right.* DARNLEY *looks round the room, peering fearfully into the shadows. Suddenly he imagines that he sees something.*)

What's that? Look—look! There in the corner. God! Taylor, Taylor!

(TAYLOR *comes running in, right. He carries a flagon of wine.*)

TAYLOR. In God's name, what is it, sire? Why did you call?

DARNLEY. Nothing. I thought it Davy's ghost again. Give me the wine.

(*He swills it off.*)

So. I am a man again. Lock the door, Taylor. We will to bed.

(*He stretches himself out on the couch, lying down with his face towards the small door, left.* TAYLOR

locks and bolts the door right. Then begins to extinguish the candles on the walls. He puts all these out except one. Then he lies down at his master's feet on the floor. There is a pause. Then slowly, slowly, the little door left is pushed gently open. At first one only sees a slit of light on the floor. This grows wider and wider. DARNLEY *notices it. He sits up in bed, terrified. Then, leaning over, touches* TAYLOR *to wake him up. He speaks in a low, terrified whisper.*)

DARNLEY. Taylor, Taylor!

TAYLOR. What is it, sire?

DARNLEY. The door. Look—look! You locked it?

(TAYLOR *springs to his feet. He is infected with his master's terror.*)

TAYLOR. Yes. God, what does it mean?

(*The door opens inch by inch; through the aperture a flood of ruddy light is thrown into the room. But no one appears at it.*)

DARNLEY. Murder! O God, deliver me from her!

(*The door slides wide open as they watch, terrified. The curtain falls.*)

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

The scene is the QUEEN'S *room in Holyrood, the room in which* RIZZIO *was killed. Behind the* prie-Dieu, *which is against the wall, there must be an inset in which the final tableau is displayed as in the frame of a picture. The window is uncurtained. Beside it is a dressing-table with a mirror.*

The curtain, rising, discloses MARY BEATON *and* MARY SEATON *busy at the dressing-table.*

MARY SEATON. Why has she made up her mind to use this room again? For a year it has been shut.

MARY BEATON. A whim. A fancy. She only told me an hour ago. Maybe she likes to see the house in which the King lodges. You can see it from this window, but not from any of the others.

MARY SEATON. Where is it?

MARY BEATON (*pointing out of the window to the northern horizon*). Yonder. She may think it brings him nearer.

MARY SEATON. Then she would choose any other room even if it were a garret under the tiles.

MARY BEATON. Fie, Mistress, you speak impudently.

MARY SEATON. Oh, I do not blame her. I do not like the smell of last night's drink myself. I could not abide the King near me.

MARY BEATON. Well, I do not know what the reason was, but there's no sense in keeping a good room shut up for nothing.

MARY SEATON. Nothing. Davy was killed here. They say his blood still shows on the floor.

MARY BEATON. Oh, they say lots of things. I don't believe them. All I know is that she told me she would use this room to-night, and to get it ready for her.

MARY SEATON. She's queer these days.

MARY BEATON. Women are always queer when they're in love.

MARY SEATON. Do you think she is in love with the other —with Bothwell?

MARY BEATON (*with a sharp, dry laugh*). In love? She'd go through Hell for him.

MARY SEATON. Sometimes I think she has already gone through Hell. Poor Mary!

MARY BEATON. Hush. I hear her step. For God's sake be cheerful, girl! She needs cheering.

MARY SEATON. She never laughs now.

(MARY *enters. She is nervous, distrait; while the two girls stand waiting, she goes over to the window and looks out towards Kirk o' Field.*)

MARY. Is there no news?

MARY BEATON. News? No, Madam.

(MARY *comes to the dressing-table and sits in front of it. The two girls busy themselves removing her jewels, arranging her hair, etc.,* MARY SEATON *chattering gaily.*)

MARY BEATON. So Bastian is married at last. I thought we would never be through with it.

MARY SEATON. The more fool Bastian. I wonder men marry. I would not marry if I was a man. Or if I did I would be like my lord of Bothwell, and keep my wife at home where I might be domesticated when I wished, and she had to be whether she wished or no.

MARY. 'Tis what all men ask for, child.

MARY SEATON. That is no reason why we women should give it to them, Madam. Wait till I marry. I will lead my husband a dance swifter and more exciting than any we danced to-night.

MARY BEATON. How do you know that you will find a husband?

MARY SEATON. Mary is going to find me a husband. Aren't you, Mary? A nice old one, who will let me do just whatever I like and die soon and leave me a fortune.

MARY BEATON. You talk foolishly. Would you want your husband to die?

MARY SEATON. Of course, if he was old and had a fortune to leave. If he was so selfish as to disoblige me, I

would even assist him on his way to heaven or the other place.

MARY BEATON. They would burn you if you killed your husband.

MARY SEATON. Oh, but I would only kill him with kindness. He should find my company so distracting that for very peace he would have to leave the world. I would kiss him out of it. But I would take good care he went.

MARY. Peace, girl. You do not know what you speak of.

MARY SEATON. I am only joking, Madam.

MARY (*smiling at her*). I know. But I am tired. I—I have a headache. Your chattering wearies me.

MARY BEATON. She is a feather-brain.

MARY SEATON (*fluttering about her*). Oh, you poor dear!

MARY. Nay, that is worse still, *ma mie*. Leave me. I am not in the mood for petting. You can go, both of you.

(*The two* MARIES *go out. As they do so,* MARY'S *sharp eyes discover someone in the passage outside.*)

Who is that?

(MARY HAMILTON *comes into the room. She is dressed in black like a widow.* MARY, *who has risen, shrinks from her as if from a ghost.*)

You? Good God, what brings you here, girl? To-night of all nights. Speak! Why have you come?

MARY HAMILTON. Madam, I come to warn you. (*She speaks hurriedly, excitedly.*) Once I was your friend, your playfellow.

MARY. My playfellow? Dear God, did I ever play? I had forgotten it.

MARY HAMILTON. They are saying dreadful things in the city—terrible things that I cannot believe—that must be the foul inventions of traitors.

MARY. They say? Who? Whom do you mean, girl?

MARY HAMILTON. All men: the ministers, the townspeople, at the corners of streets, in the inns, in the churches. Oh, you would be the last to hear of it, my Queen. They dare not say such things to your face. But they are said—and openly.

MARY (*coldly*). What is it they say, Mistress?

MARY HAMILTON (*in a whisper*). That you mean to—to murder him—the King—your husband. Mary, I loved you once. I think I have always loved you, cruel as you are. For God's sake, if any such thought has crossed your mind, put it from you.

MARY. Why should you care, girl?

MARY HAMILTON. Have I not said I love you? Is it not strange, seeing that you are a woman? It is your spirit, I think. It is like a thin blade of tempered steel, a thin, steady flame burning on a great altar in the centre of a desert. Oh, do not spoil it for me.

MARY. What else have you heard? Tell me—tell me quickly.

MARY HAMILTON. It is said that you have devised a plot, you and the Lord Bothwell. That you have brought the King here to this lonely house and—and mean to kill him.

MARY. Why should the Lord Bothwell do that?

MARY HAMILTON. Because he loves you. Is there a man in all the world who would not love you if you beckoned to him?

MARY. What else is there, girl?

MARY HAMILTON. To-night there is fresh rumour. They know that you are storing powder in the house. Bothwell's men have been seen carrying it there. They seek a reason, and they seek it with winks and nods and shrugs of the shoulders that make my blood run cold. They will not hinder, but they watch and wait—for what, Mary, for what?

MARY. Powder? Who told them that?

MARY HAMILTON. What do you mean? Why do you look so strangely? God! What is that?

(*The glare of the explosion at Kirk o' Field lights up the whole room. The window is a flame of fire, centred in a point on the northern horizon. The glass rattles and shakes, and a low, heavy rumble fills the air.* MARY HAMILTON *shrinks back, terrified.* MARY *goes to the window.*)

MARY (*regally*). There is my answer. There is that powder you speak of. You come too late, girl. Too late—too late. Do you know what room this is? There (*pointing*), there is the love of my people and the love of my husband written in the blood of my servant, slain while he clung to my dress. They cannot wash the stain from the floor. Go to these people, go to these spies who babble in churches and gossip at the corners of the streets. Tell them I am Mary of Scots still, and they may see my answer in the sky, written in letters of fire. For blood I have given them blood, and treachery for their treachery. I was their Queen, and they have plotted against my life and honour. I was their guest, and they have mocked at me and shot out their tongues. I was a woman, and their one thought has been to use my weakness. But I have done with weakness. There is no more of the woman left in me. There is my answer. There! Go, tell them that.

MARY HAMILTON. Mary——

MARY. Go!

(MARY HAMILTON *shrinks back terrified and disappears.* MARY *stands still for a moment at the window. From outside comes a confused babel of shouts and cries, a murmur of people waking, startled, from their sleep. The alarm bell of the Palace begins to ring. Its heavy, slow strokes*

make the air quiver. MARY *kneels at the* prie-Dieu. *Then suddenly bowing her head on her hands bursts into sobs.*)

MARY. O God, what have I done? What have I done?

(*She remains here, kneeling. On the wall over her head, set as if in the frame of a picture, appears a vision. It is the scene of her own execution some twenty years later. The block is there, and the Headsman, dressed in scarlet, leaning on his axe, the English lords looking on; and she herself, the central figure, dressed in red. Her eyes are bandaged, and she is kneeling, seeking piteously with outstretched hands for the block. The vision fades.*)

MARY. Oh, love, my love, God will not pardon us.

(*The curtain falls slowly.*)

END OF THE PLAY

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